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ADVENTURES FOR TSR ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1991 ISSUE #27

COVER: The arrival of adventurers interrupts a lesson in "The School of Nekros." Tom Miller's cover shows the necromancer Mephista and the skeletal red dragon from whom she is learning lost spells.

"If I Made Games For TSR . . ."

At the 1990 GEN CON® Game Fair, two editors from TSR's Games Department (Anne Brown and Andria Hayday) conducted seminars to learn what gamers think about TSR products. I've just received a long report detailing what the gamers who attended these sessions had to say, and I couldn't help but wonder how these preferences match with those of DUNGEON Adventures readers.

Here are three suggestions that the GEN CON convention participants wanted to see in TSR products:

1. "More visual aids and player handouts for adventures" (maps, notes from NPCs, menus, wanted posters, just about anything that the DM can hand to the players). While we can't add loose items to DUNGEON Magazine (and I know you hate to cut up your issues!), we have been trying to include more of these sorts of things; see the *deck of many things* in issue 19, for example. What other kinds of visual aids and handouts would you like to see that you think would be possible to include in DUNGEON Magazine's format?

2. "Make the modules more DM friendly." The DMs at the seminars asked for anything that will cut down their preparation time and make games run more quickly. This included such things as monster-statistics tables, more complete statistics, more subheads to direct the DM through the text, etc. To this list, I would include boxed text (on which we've had quite a debate in the past). For longer adventures with lots of monsters, we've used summary tables. Do you like these? In what other ways can we make DUNGEON Adventures more DM friendly?

3. "Add more flavor to adventures, particularly more complete personalities for NPCs, and more detailed settings." I hope you've noticed that I insist on personality for NPCs and even monsters. And I look at each dungeon, castle, tavern, and town with an eye toward how functional it is for the creatures who live there. How are we doing in this regard? Does the

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(AD&D® game, levels 4-7) Meet a goblin who has the best (and deadliest) toy around. 20

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Vol. V, No. 3

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Faire shields, gay steedes, bright armes be my delight:
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LETTERS

Money Talks—Loudly

I finally feel compelled to respond to one of the many criticisms I have heard voiced over the years concerning both this magazine and DRAGON® Magazine. Readers are constantly complaining about the amount of magazine space devoted to advertising, the most recent complaint being in the Letters section of DUNGEON® issue #26.

Here is some clarification from an avid gamer who also happens to be an accountant. TSR, Inc. is first and foremost a *business* enterprise. As such it exists to make money. The company has people and bills to pay. The fact that this business has the integrity to be genuinely concerned with the welfare of its consumer public and attempts to bring us its products at the lowest possible cost is a fantastic bonus but not necessarily a requirement.

There are two methods by which a publication makes money: the price charged for the product, and income from advertising revenues. Therefore, the primary ways to increase revenue (whether for the company's benefit or to cover rising production costs), are to increase advertising sales and/or to *increase the sale price of the magazine.* We have been fortunate that TSR management has most often desired to do the former and rarely has resorted to the latter. It should be clear that there is a direct and opposite relationship between the price of a magazine and the amount of advertising therein. By increasing the advertising space sold, the company can cover rising production costs without resorting to a price increase. It has also been my observation that, with increased advertisements, the magazine has typically increased the number of pages per issue to maintain the amount of space devoted to gaming material.

It has been my experience that these publications have continually improved in quality over the years to become the excellent magazines they are today, and I am sure they will continue to grow and improve into the future. However, in order to do so, it will always be necessary to insure that the bills are paid, and I hope TSR, Inc. always will choose to sell more advertising over raising the price of these extremely enjoyable and informative magazines.

As a final note, I am very much in favor of the new plastic mailing bags used for the magazines. I know they are not as environmentally beneficial as the paper ones, but I've just gotten fed up with having my magazine arrive with torn pages and frayed edges.

Debra L. Maxwell
Seattle, Washington

Going Monthly?

I disagree with Chris Moulthrop (issue #26) who wrote that using outside advertising in DUNGEON Magazine was a form of cheating us. All the ads you've printed so far seem perfectly legitimate. The product I sent for was inexpensive, arrived quickly, and did everything that was promised.

With all of these other changes going on, I'd very much like to ask when, if ever, is DUNGEON Adventures going monthly? DRAGON Magazine has had this advantage for longer than I can remember. We're all tired of waiting two long months for five or six modules which can be played in one month's time.

Mike Kinol
Nome, Alaska

We've had several discussions here about the feasibility of producing DUNGEON Adventures as a monthly magazine. I have so far been reluctant to suggest this because I don't feel that the volume and quality of adventures we receive is sufficient to fill a monthly magazine. I want to keep the quality high, even if you have to wait a bit longer for each issue.

Down With Moonmelons!

I'm a Dungeon Master running a low-level AD&D® campaign, and I recently ran "Of Kings Unknown" by Randy Maxwell (issue #25). Randy deserves a hearty round of applause! The players in my group were shocked to see orcs with horns, antlers, and eyestalks wreaking havoc on their hapless PCs. In fact, when they found the melons from whence the orcish oddities originated, they destroyed them all in disgust, thus never collecting the 100 gp per moonmelon.

Dylan Black
No Address Given

Perfect Since #1

I don't understand it at all. For over four years now, you guys have given the role-playing world a special treat at a very affordable price. Each and every module you print is outstanding, the mix of different types of adventures you present is fair to everyone, and the cover and inside artwork are like nothing else. Yet, in every issue, I see complaint after complaint about your magazine, and *I'm sick of it.*

It seems that every time you decide to try something new, whether it's permanent or for just a couple of issues, the letters come pouring in. Oh, sure, there are always a few nice people who commend you for the innovation, but there are always many more negative, often cruel remarks demanding that you publish only a certain type of game. Take the MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ adventure you printed in issue #25, for example. Just because you thought an experiment with a different type of game system would be nice (and it was), everybody had to write in and tell you how much they hated it.

I am truly sorry that you receive so many of these awful letters, and can only imagine how seeing them ruins your day. Your magazine has been per-

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fect since issue one, and I hate to see people put down a good thing. Keep up the good work.

P.S. When are you going to print another solo adventure? I haven't seen one since issue #20.

Barb Brkovich
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

We do get lots of mail praising our efforts, and I try to be fair in printing both the nice and the negative mail. I encourage our readers to express their opinions about the magazine, both good and bad. An editor can't afford to let the mail ruin his or her day. Besides, we too must send out negative mail (rejection letters), which we hope the recipients do not take personally.

As I've said before, we'll print solo adventures when we receive some.

Thanks for Changes

Standard TSR modules can get quite expensive for the low-budget DM. DUNGEON Adventures is an excellent source for inexpensive, well-written adventures. This is the reason I purchase your magazine, and I commend you on a fantastic job.

I used to subscribe to DUNGEON Magazine until I started receiving my issues in not-so-good shape due to Mother Nature (those brown sacks don't hold up so well in the rain). After hearing news that you have switched to plastic wrappers, I've decided to resubscribe. I want to thank you for the change.

Another change I want to thank you for is the inclusion of adventures other than for D&D®/AD&D games. I thought the printing of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES (issue #25) and the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ (issue #26) adventures was an interesting idea. Even though I don't play these two games, it still gives me newfound hope that you might include a STAR FRONTIERS® adventure (hint, hint).

As a last word, I would like to thank the writers, artists (great work on the cover of issue #26, Scott), Barbara, Roger, and the rest of the DUNGEON staff for a great job.

Jeffrey J. Hanshaw
Ooltewah, Tennessee

Fantasy Triumphs!

There were many arguments in issue #26 both for and against the inclusion of other TSR games in the pages of DUNGEON magazine. Well, I must cast my vote against their inclusion. This is not because I am close minded about these games, but I have very little time to play RPGs, and I prefer the AD&D system to the others.

Consider that, until you published the MARVEL SUPER HEROES module in issue #25, a creative DM willing to put in a little extra work could have converted any of the modules in these pages to suit his own system and campaign world, even if they were solo or Oriental modules. These other games, however, cannot be converted and are practically useless to those running some type of D&D game. Thus, for those who play the D&D or AD&D games, the magazine no longer retains its full value.

On the other side of the coin, you have those who play these other TSR games getting a module for their particular game once every few issues. Would it be worth their money to buy a DUNGEON magazine for one module? My guess is no. So, unless you have the time to enthusiastically embrace all the TSR game systems, you're essentially wasting your money.

Finally, I don't know how high a value you place on a single subscriber, but if you continue to print these modules, you will lose this one.

Greg Hickman
Collinsville, Illinois

As of the end of October, the tally of letters about non-D&D/AD&D modules stands at 19 for including these in DUNGEON Adventures, and 36 against publishing them. We enjoyed hearing from all of you and are sorry that we have space to publish only a representative sampling of your letters.

Publisher Jim Ward and I have discussed this question at length and have decided that, for the present time, we will not publish any further non-D&D/AD&D adventures. As I stated in issue #25, this was something of an experiment. In the end, our thinking ran much like that in Greg Hickman's letter: Adding one adventure per issue for other TSR game systems won't really gain us new readers, and we certainly don't want to alienate our loyal readers. Ω

Mug Shots

When Dan Killoran sent us his recent change-of-address notice, we couldn't believe that he really lives on Dungeon Avenue, so we asked for proof. Dan mailed us the photo reproduced above and prompted yet another idea for a contest.

If you see other amusing indications of role-playing transplanted into the real world, grab your camera and send us a snapshot. We'll publish the best for your amusement, and those readers whose photos are chosen for publication will each receive a mug with the DUNGEON Adventures and DRAGON Magazine logos. All photos submitted become the property of TSR, Inc. and DUNGEON Adventures, and cannot be returned.

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TARFIL'S TOMB

BY CHARLES J. NEVERDOWSKI

He died a good man. He'd like to stay that way.

Artwork by Tom Baxa

Charles wrote "Tarfil's Tomb" in his spare time while studying electrical engineering. A recent graduate, he is currently seeking employment in the real world. This module is dedicated to the memory of Jeff Burns, who introduced Charles to the D&D® game in 1981.

"Tarfil's Tomb" is a D&D® game adventure for Expert-level characters. It is designed for a resourceful party of 5-7 characters of levels 10-14 (around 70 total levels). This adventure is set in the D&D Known World, starting in the city of Kelvin and proceeding eastward onto the Nameless Moor, in the Grand Duchy of Karameikos. Several monsters in this adventure, such as the beholder and the banshee, have been taken from the D&D Companion Set. The D&D game accessory GAZ1 *The Grand Duchy of Karameikos* may be useful in setting up the background, but it is not required. The adventure may easily be placed on a moor or in a swamp nearly anywhere the DM wishes.

For the Player Characters

Read or paraphrase the following information to the players at the start of the adventure:

It is early autumn, and you have recently arrived in the city of Kelvin, a stopover on your long and arduous journey southward. After a successful summer adventuring in the north, you have decided to spend the winter months in a more hospitable climate.

Unfortunately, the weather for the past 10 days has been poor. You entered the mountains expecting a comfortable change from the grueling late-summer heat of the lowlands, but chilling wind and lashing rain made your trek over the Black Peaks extremely unpleasant. You entered the city longing for a hot meal, a warm bath, and a soft bed.

You have been in Kelvin for several days now, with the weather showing little sign of change. With your supplies restocked and your mounts well rested, you anxiously wait for the weather to change so that you can continue your journey. As comfortable as the Silver Ladle Inn has been these days past, you still find yourself ready to push on.

Your fourth evening in town finds you all gathered around a heavily laden trestle at the Ladle, gloomily awaiting a break in the weather as you take long pulls from your flagons of ale. As you

ponder a trip to the seedier section of town for another night of city life, dreading the long tramp through the muddy streets, you notice someone so odd looking as to stand out from the crowd in the expensive establishment of the Ladle.

Your attention has been attracted by a pale, bespectacled little man in a muddy gray cloak and sandals. A small metallic holy symbol that represents the Church of Traladara dangles around the gangly man's neck.

Upon entering the common room, the little man scuttles up to the proprietor, who greets the odd looking man as "Brother" and asks him how he may be of service. The muddy man replies by taking the barman by his sleeve and pulling him toward a quiet corner of the room.

As the pair draws away, the small man begins to speak furtively, gesturing rapidly with his hands. The innkeeper gives the man his full attention. When the little man finishes, the owner gives him a curt nod and motions toward your table. The little man peers at you through his spectacles for a second, bows to the larger man, and inches toward your table.

Clasping his hands in a most suppliant manner, the small man introduces himself as, "Ivan Sumanov, your humble servant."

"The gracious innkeeper," the scrivenly looking man continues, "has told me that you are adventurers of some renown, and by appearances I do believe that he spoke most truthfully of you. It is to my extreme good fortune that I have found you here, as I have never before had need for the services of the likes of yourselves." The small man pauses for a brief second to allow himself a breath and then continues.

"I have a story that must be told and, although I am but a lowly novice of the Church of Traladara, I implore you to at least hear my story before passing judgment upon me."

The man glances suspiciously around the room and takes a seat. Then, pushing his spectacles up his nose, he begins his tale.

"Three days ago I had a dream. Not just an ordinary dream, you see, but a vision. I say 'vision' because it concerned happenings that none of the wise men of Karameikos are aware of, yet these events are of great concern and displeasure to the divine patrons of this land. Even the foul weather of late stems from the displeasure of revered Halav.

"I went to Bishop Pyotrevich, the Prelate of the Church of Traladara here in Kelvin. I spoke to him of my vision and my firm belief of its validity. His Grace spurned me, saying I shouldn't waste my time or his with such fantasy, telling me that I was forbidden to pursue the matter further at risk of being excommunicated from the church for my blasphemy. Although I did not understand his anger and denial, I still fear acting against his word. Just to act against his will is sin, so you must see how imperative it is that you believe me and help right the wrongs being done, as I dare not risk approaching anyone with my story ever again.

"But I stray from my purpose. As I said earlier, it has been two days since I had this dream. In my vision I saw a warrior—actually, the spirit of a long-dead warrior. He was running toward me across a wide, grassy plain. He wore a breastplate of bronze, and upon his head was a gilded helm with a horsetail plume. He carried a long spear and held a large round shield of embossed leather.

"This warrior spoke to me in an archaic tongue, yet his voice was pure and angelic, and I understood him clearly. 'Greetings, disciple of Halav,' the gleaming warrior said. 'I require the aid of a mortal, and my lord has bade that I seek you, as you are destined for greatness in his service.

" 'I am Tarfil, Warlord of Clan Tarvon, vassal to King Halav. Two millennia ago, I was slain upon this field.' As he waved his arm out across the plain, I could see two great armies locked in a pitched battle. Bronze-armored men and tall, jackal-headed beastmen chopped and stabbed at one another in a chaotic, churning melee.

" 'We won the field that day long past, though I and many of my companions never lived to see our victory,' the man in my vision said. Again he waved his arm, and the scene changed. Now only men moved about, picking out the wounded from the dying and the dead. The warrior continued, 'The men labored long, laying their slain comrades in turf-covered mounds and building huge pyres to burn the carcasses of the beastmen.

" 'My own bones still lie within the tallest of those barrows, a mound marked only by seven pillars of granite. The army marched off to join our lord in the final battle, and the barrows now lie forgotten upon a windswept moor.

" 'A fortnight ago, evil entered my resting place and now torments me in the spirit world. Even now I am pursued by fell beasts summoned by one who chants binding spells over the dust that was my body in life. He desires to ensnare my soul for some evil but unknown purpose.'

"Suddenly, I heard an eerie baying and, looking out across the plain, I could make out four black shapes racing like the wind across the swaying grass.

" 'They come,' the spirit said. 'I have tarried far too long, for the beasts again draw near.

" 'Awake, disciple of Halav, for in your dreams these fell creatures of darkness may steal your soul. Awake and aid me!'

"Tarfil turned away, and with the grace of the swiftest deer bounded across the plain, leaving his pursuers far behind. Even as he fled, I turned to see more clearly the beasts that pursued him: great, fiercesome hounds, black as jet, with gaping maws and glowing yellow eyes.

"I awoke in my bed, with the vision of those ghastly beasts etched in my memory. As I lay there pondering the events of my sleep, I could faintly hear the distant baying of hounds.

"Since that night I have slept ill. I have labored ceaselessly, searching through ancient scrolls and forgotten texts, looking for some clue to the location of the spirit-warrior's tomb. Then, last night, as I prayed for guidance, a certain scroll I had missed was revealed to me. Written upon it in a nearly indecipherable text was a description of the barrows I sought and their location. I believe the battlefield that Tarfil spoke of is somewhere on the nameless moor to the east, where the River Volaga flows down from the Wulfwolde Hills."

Brother Sumanov shows the adventurers a rough map (see The Unnamed Moor map).

"Why the Immortals would choose one so unworthy as myself to be their instrument, I cannot say. I know not what evil you may encounter, but I must beg you to journey to Tarfil's tomb and free him from his torment. I have neither the ways nor means to do so myself, though I would give my life to save his soul. Please, noble ones, go with all of my prayers."

Ivan Sumanov: AC 10; C2; hp 8; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MV 120' (40'); Save C2; ML 7; AL L; W 18, Ch 14. Ivan is unarmed and unarmored at the time of this meeting, and has only a *cure light wounds* spell memorized.

For the Dungeon Master

Ivan Sumanov is an adept in the Church of Traladara in Kelvin, and has been contacted in his dreams by a spirit for reasons detailed later. Ivan was chosen because he is destined to rise to greatness in the service of the Three Immortals. However, he has far to go to meet his destiny. Luck should always be with Ivan, and the DM should go to great pains, short of divine intervention, to prevent Ivan's death. Anyone who insists on harming him, however, will be inflicted with a subtle but powerful curse: All Traladarans coming into contact with the assailant will have a feeling of uneasiness and distrust, even if they have been lifelong friends. The degree of this uneasiness and distrust is proportional to the Traladaran's piety. Also, members of the Cult of Halav can actually see the curse as an evil aura and will secretly try to cause the cursed person trouble or harm at every turn. Only the undertaking of a grand quest (beyond the scope of this adventure) will allow some redemption in the eyes of immortal Halav and undo the effects of the curse.

In spite of Bishop Pyotrevich's strong reprimand, the prelate is simply extremely paranoid about his position in the church, as he obtained it more through manipulation and politics than by piousness. The suggestion that the Immortals might send dreams to a novice instead of to himself causes the bishop to react rather vehemently. After all, he is only human.

All that Ivan told the PCs is true, but there is a good deal of information that he does not possess.

The spirit warrior was a Traldar chieftain slain in battle against gnolls 2,000 years ago and lain in a barrow near the Volaga River. Recently, however, an evil patriarch by the name of Annakarr entered the barrow.

For the past fortnight, Annakarr and his followers have been chanting an evil spell of binding. The knowledge to cast such a spell was a gift, in the form of an ancient tome of power, from the Chaotic beings they worship. The casting of the spell requires a great amount of power and energy but, if successful, will give Annakarr control over the soul of the spirit warrior, bringing the warrior back to life in a form similar to that of a ghost. This warrior-ghost would be completely under Annakarr's control, forced to do whatever evil deeds are commanded of it.

Once Annakarr has control of the warrior, he plans to raise an army of undead and Chaotic monsters and put the Traldar spirit at their head. Annakarr feels that the Traladaran peasants around Kelvin would never have the courage to resist one claiming to be the spirit of their ancestor. Thus, Annakarr could force them to accept him as their leader, making Kelvin a new stronghold for the forces of Chaos.

Journey to the Barrows

After the PCs meet Ivan Sumanov and accept his mission, they must decide on a path to the barrow grounds. If they ask about the moor, people will tell them that it is indeed most treacherous. Danger, both natural and otherwise, abounds. Marked paths are few, and many of these lead nowhere or directly into treacherous bogs. Seemingly solid ground offering safe passage may turn out to be a sucking morass capable of swallowing a rider and his mount in a matter of minutes, leaving no trace of their passage. As for the denizens of the moor, the Traladaran peasants speak of werewolves and trolls, flying dragons come down from the Wulfwolde Hills to hunt, and strange flickering lights that lead the unwary into the fatal bogs.

Should the PCs seek a guide, they are directed to the taverns near the eastern gate of the city. Few people know the winding paths of the moor, and fewer still willingly tread its paths.

Near the east gate, the party is told about a man named Sergei Mishev, a Traladaran man known to wander the moor at times. "Look for Sergei at the Grinnin' Bear," the party is told.

Within the dim confines of the Inn of the Grinning Werebear, the PCs find Sergei Mishev speaking quietly with several Traladaran miners. Sergei seems a simple man, with weathered features and thick, graying hair.

Sergei Mishev: AC 2; F7; hp 36; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MV 120' (40'); Save F7; ML 8; AL L; S 15, W 14, D 16. Sergei wears *scale mail +2* and carries a *long sword +1, +2 vs. lycanthropes*, a silver dagger, a long bow, and a quiver with 11 silver arrows, eight *arrows +1*, and an *arrow of lycanthrope slaying*.

When the party approaches Sergei about guiding them across the moor, he demands that they give him a full explanation of the purpose of their journey. He has no desire to lead a band of thrill-seekers on a foolish treasure hunt; he has done that before and returned alone.

If the PCs truthfully explain their expedition, Sergei will quickly agree to guide them. Sergei has a great deal of common sense and is very capable of guiding the party across the moor to Tarfil's tomb. He is a devout follower of the Traladaran church and will gladly serve revered Halav. All he asks in payment is a magical item or two that will make his future journeys across the moor a bit safer, and a small portion of any treasure for provisions and donation to the church.

Sergei was a sheepherder living on the eastern border of the barony until seven years ago when his farm was burned and his family butchered by a ravaging band of werewolves. He has since labored upon the moor, hunting creatures of Chaos and trying to give some protection to the farmers and peat diggers who eke out a living on the edge of the vast moor.

If the PCs do not seek a guide, they will find it hard going on the moor. The normally poor terrain is made even worse by the inclement weather of late. If the PCs consider traveling by river, they find that the many days of rain have turned the Volaga into a raging torrent. No river captain is willing to pilot a boat for them, and any small craft they might buy would be of little use against the dangerous current.

If the adventurers opt to travel by horseback, they may skirt around the moor to the north or south for a day, or they may strike directly eastward across it. Either way, the trip by horseback will take two full days. The same trip on foot will take four days. Travel across the moor is slow going, and skirting the moor takes the party well out of its way. Thus, the routes balance out, with the trip taking the same amount of time no matter which route is chosen. There are no practical shortcuts, as even flying is made hazardous by the storms. If Sergei is leading the party, he crosses the river at Kelvin and travels

along the southeast border of the moor during the first half of the trip.

Although the western third of the moor is claimed by Baron Kelvin as part of his dominion, the area claimed is sparsely populated by herdsmen and peat diggers dwelling in small, isolated villages of wattle and daub huts. This area is only slightly less dangerous than the eastern portion of the moor.

While the party travels across the moor, the DM should try to play up the atmosphere created by the foul weather and the nature of the moor itself. Nights upon the moor are cold and wet. The days are miserably humid when it isn't raining and miserably chill when it is. Insects, mud, mist, wind, and fog all affect travel on the moor; working these into the description of travel can add to the atmosphere. The PCs will see very little sunlight on their trip to the barrow.

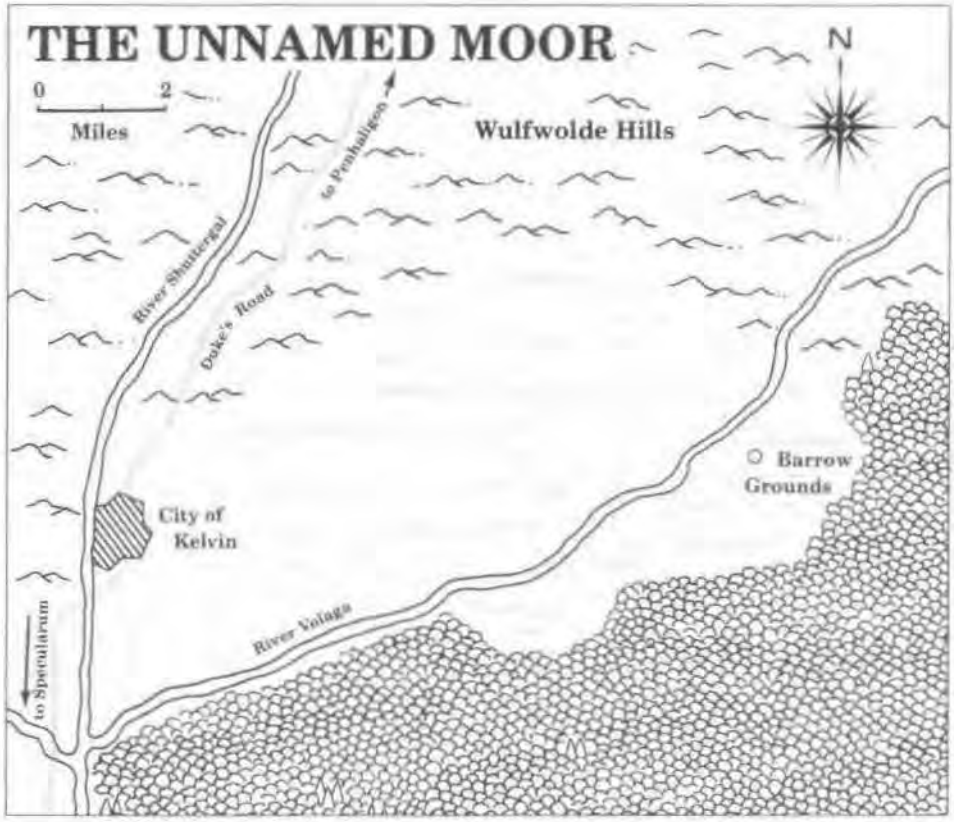
Travel on the moor without a guide is extremely hazardous. For every two hours of daylight during which the party travels on the paths, there is a 1-in-20 chance that the lead PCs will stumble into a well-disguised bog. This chance takes into consideration those that a wary party saw and bypassed along their route; a careless party should be penalized accordingly. The rate at which the trapped characters sink and subsequently drown is left to the DM's discretion. If any of the PCs wander around or try to travel at night, the chance of falling into a bog becomes 1 in 6, checked every turn.

Check for wandering monsters every four hours; an encounter occurs on a 1 on 1d12. Three encounter tables are given; the DM should choose the appropriate table for the path taken.

At the halfway point in the journey (the first night by horseback or the second night by foot), when the party is camped on the moor, only the following encounter occurs. If the party is on foot, roll normally for wandering encounters during the first and third nights.

Werewolf Attack

At midnight on the evening when the PCs reached the halfway point of their journey, as a thick fog rolls across the sodden moor and the full moon glimmers a deep orange in the southeastern sky, a long howl breaks the silence of the night. If Sergei is with the party and not on guard, he awakens immediately and strings his bow. If on guard, he quickly rouses the PCs and tells them to prepare for an attack.



Soon thereafter, more howls sound from several directions around the encampment. From the distance comes a short yipping bark. In another direction, rustling noises emanate from a thicket of heather only yards from the camp. Suddenly, from yet another direction in the darkness, a great dark shape hurtles upon the adventurers.

It is a huge wolf with gleaming fangs, its sable coat glistening in the damp night. The wolf crouches in the center of the camp for a brief second, snarling viciously, then leaps upon anyone standing (or lying) nearby. Within seconds, the campsite is overrun by wolves of all sizes. The pack seems to be directed by a huge she-wolf of unnatural proportions, with a thick silver coat and enormous fangs.

This werewolf pack consists of 10 normal wolves, six dire wolves, and nine werewolves. The werewolf with 30 hp is the pack leader, who attacks as a 5-HD monster and adds +2 to damage rolls. This is Valeria, Sergei's sister. It was she who betrayed her kin and slew the rest of Sergei's family.

Wolves (10): AC 7; HD 2+2; hp 16, 14, 13×3, 12×2, 11, 10, 9; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1-6; MV 180' (60'); Save F1; ML 8 or 6; AL N; XP 25; BD/39.

Dire wolves (6): AC 6; HD 4+1; hp 30, 25×2, 23, 20×2; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2-8; MV 150' (50'); Save F2; ML 8; AL N; XP 125; BD/39 (Wolf).

Werewolves (9): AC 5 (9); HD 4*; hp 30, 29, 26×3, 24, 22×2, 20; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2-8; MV 180' (60'); Save F4; ML 8; AL C; XP 125; BD/33 (Lycanthrope).

The great she-wolf is viciously cunning, directing the pack with snarls and barks from a hillock or rock outcropping near the edge of the campsite. Valeria pits the weaker wolves against horses or sleeping characters, and sends the werewolves against any points of strong resistance. She avoids facing a strong PC but will not hesitate to strike the weak or to strike from behind.

If Sergei is with the party, he uses his silver and magical arrows to help anyone hard pressed by the fanged onslaught. If Sergei was not with the PCs when they left Kelvin, he joins them now, having been hunting this band of werewolves for several nights. He runs howling into the encampment,

Encounters En Route to the Barrows
(Roll 1d6)

Northern Route (Hills)	Eastern Route (Moor)	Southern Route (Forests)
1. Patrol: 3-18 horsemen (plus horses)	1. 5-20 bugbears	1. 2-24 elves
2. 1-4 mountain lions	2. 2-16 ghouls	2. Caer Wedgewood
3. 3-30 bandits	3. 1-8 trolls	3. 3-18 sprites
4. 3-30 gnomes	4. 3-18 wolves	4. 1-4 treants
5. 2-16 hippogriffs	5. 1-8 spectres	5. 2-8 black widow spiders
6. 1-6 hill giants	6. 2-12 ogres	6. 1-4 dryads

Bandit: AC 6; HD 1; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MV 90' (30'); Save T1; ML 8; AL C; XP 10; BD/25.

Black widow spider: AC 6; HD 3*; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2-12 plus poison; MV 60' ((20'), in web 120' (40'); Save F2; ML 8; AL N; XP 50; BD/38 (Spider, giant).

Bugbear: AC 5; HD 3+1; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1; MV 90' (30'); Save F3; ML 9; AL C; XP 75; BD/27.

Caer Wedgewood (druid): AC 9; D9; hp 31; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; MV 120' (40'); Save C9; ML 10; AL N; W 16, C 15; quarterstaff; DM's choice of spells. Wedgewood is a cleric who has attained 9th level and is beginning his training as a druid. He has been living and meditating in the forest for a month now, but no high-level druid mentor has yet appeared to him.

Dryad: AC 5; HD 2*; #AT special; Dmg nil; MV 120' (40'; Save E4; ML 6; AL N; ER/48.

Elf: AC 5; HD 1*; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MV 120' (40'); Save E1; ML 8 or 10; AL N; BD/30. These elves are traveling to the wedding of a relative and have no knowledge of Tarfil's tomb.

Ghoul: AC 6; HD 2*; #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-3 plus special; MV 90' (30'); Save F2; ML 9; AL C; XP 25; BD/30.

Gnome: AC 5; HD 1; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MV 60' (20'); Save D1; ML 8 or 10; AL N; BD/30. This group of gnomes have left their overcrowded village and are scouting a site for a new town. They have no interest in ancient human warriors and know nothing about tombs on the moor.

Hill giant: AC 4; HD 8; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MV 120' (40'); Save F8; ML 8; AL C; XP 650; ER/50 (Giant).

Hippogriff: AC 5; HD 3+1; #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-10; MV 180' (60'); flying 360' (120'); Save F2; ML 8; AL N; XP 50.

Horseman: AC 7; F1; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MV 120' (40'); Save F1; ML 8; AL L; leather armor, sword, dagger. This patrol from Kelvin is investigating reports of a bandit gang operating from a base in the Wulfwolde Hills.

Horse, riding: AC 7; HD 2; #AT 2 hooves; Dmg 1-4/1-4; MV 240' (80'); Save F1; ML 7; AL N; ER/51.

Mountain lion: AC 6; HD 3+2; #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; MV 150' (50'); Save F2; ML 8; AL N; XP 50; BD/27 (Cat, great).

Ogre: AC 5; HD 4+1; #AT 1 club; Dmg by weapon type +2; MV 90' (30'); Save F4; ML 10; AL C; XP 125; BD/35.

Spectre: AC 2; HD 6**; #AT 1 touch; Dmg 1-8 plus double energy drain; MV 150' (50'), flying 300' (100'); Save F6; ML 11; AL C; XP 725; ER/56.

Sprite: AC 5; HD ½*; #AT 1 spell; Dmg nil; MV 60' (20'), flying 180' (60'); Save E1; ML 7; AL N; BD/38.

Treant: AC 2; HD 8*; #AT 2 branches; Dmg 2-12/2-12; MV 60' (20'); Save F8; ML 9; AL L; ER/56.

Troll: AC 4; HD 6+3*; #AT 2 claws/1 bite; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-10; MV 120' (40'); Save F6; ML 10 (8); AL C; XP 650; ER/56.

Wolf: AC 7; HD 2+2; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1-6; MV 180' (60'); Save F1; ML 8 or 6; AL N; XP 25; BD/39.

firing silver arrows as he comes. If none of the party members slay the pack's leader, Sergei saves his *arrow of lycanthrope slaying* until he gets a clear shot at his sister. Then he screams, "Valeria, I do this for you!" and looses his arrow. The shaft pierces the great silver wolf in the ribs, and it falls to the ground with a shuddering howl.

After the PCs slay or drive off the rest of the pack, they find Sergei holding a beautiful woman in his arms, caressing her long hair and singing softly. Wiping a tear from his eye as he looks up at them, he says, "It was necessary, so she wouldn't kill again." Then, taking his dead sister in his arms, he walks a short distance from the campsite and quietly buries her. If any of the party members try to follow him, he insists that he be left alone.

About an hour later, Sergei returns to the camp. If Sergei was not previously with the party, he joins them here, offering to guide them on the same terms as if the party had met him in Kelvin.

If the party's horses were slain in the werewolf attack, the trip will take two days from this point. The party should arrive at the barrow grounds at dusk on the last day of their journey.

The Barrows on the Moor

Read or paraphrase the following to the players as the party approaches the barrows:

> Ahead of you, rising from the steamy fens of the gray-green moor like small islands, are the mounds of which Ivan spoke. Through the mist and fog, you can make out four or five mounds, some topped with great pillars of stone, others with only thick tufts of gray-green grass. No trees or bushes grow on the mounds. Only around their bases does the gorse and heather common on the moor grow thick. A small stream meanders among the grave-mounds; upon its banks grow short, stunted trees.
>
> As you move closer, you can make out more shapes looming in the mist, perhaps 20 mounds in all.
>
> As you near the first barrow-mound you hear, not far off, a long, mournful wail. In the darkening twilight ahead, Sergei freezes in mid-step. Slowly he turns, and you see that his eyes are wide and filled with

fear. "Sasmirella," he mutters, and collapses to his knees, shaking and muttering prayers to the Immortals.

After several moments of shaking and praying, Sergei gradually regains his wits. A *remove fear* spell will immediately banish the fear. As soon as he is himself again, Sergei explain his terror:

"Two years ago, while I was out on the moor alone, I encountered a banshee who has wandered the moor for years. I had never encountered anything as fearsome as Sasmirella and still haven't. She almost killed me! That encounter aged me 10 years and gave me this gray hair before my time."

No matter what the adventurers try, Sergei refuses to continue on with the party. He'll wait here, he says emphatically. Besides, he led the party to the burial mounds, and someone must stay behind to watch the horses.

As Sergei leads the horses toward the shelter of a small copse of stunted trees, he turns to say, "Beware Sasmirella. She smells the blood of living souls and knows you draw near."

Leaving Sergei Mishev behind, you enter the area of mounds under which, you assume, are interred the remains of the ancient warriors killed in the battle with the beast-men.

Some of the mounds, however, are marked by squat pillars of weathered granite, the size and number of stones proportional to the height and girth of the mound on which they stand. It is this observation that brings you to the tallest mound among the barrows, one marked by a ring of seven huge pillars of lichen-covered granite.

The mound ahead of you is 15' high at its flat, grassy top. The great stones stand 10' high and form a ring approximately 25' in diameter, the whole mound being 75'-80' wide at its base.

For an instant, you see what appears to be the pale figure of a maiden in shimmering white standing between two of the pillars. But as quickly as you notice it, the figure disappears.

The ghostly figure is the banshee Sasmirella, who walked out from behind one of the stones and thence into the Ethereal Plane.

Sasmirella (banshee): AC −3; HD 13****; hp 57; #AT 1 touch/1 gaze; Dmg age 10-40 years/paralysis; MV 60' (20'); Save special; ML 9; AL C; XP 5,150; CD/32 (Haunt).

The evil patriarch, Annakarr, talked her into guarding the entrance to the violated barrow from any other intruders. She will not leave the ring of stones to attack the party, as they have no other way into the barrow than through the hole made by Annakarr. She waits on the Ethereal Plane as the adventurers advance up the mound.

If anyone in the party walks up the mound, or if the party splits up to go around the mound, Sasmirella tries to get the attention of one of the male characters. She materializes next to one of the stones near that character so that only he notices her. Then she ducks behind a pillar and re-enters the Ethereal Plane. To the male character who sees her, Sasmirella appears as she did in life, as a stunningly beautiful elf maiden. However, any female characters who are close enough to see Sasmirella see her in her true form, as will any helpless male character foolish enough or bold enough to follow her into the standing stones alone.

If any male character attempts to follow Sasmirella into the stones, he finds himself alone in the circle, with Sasmirella nowhere to be found. Suddenly, Sasmirella erupts out of the ground at the character's feet in her true form, a grotesque corpse with hollowed eyes and a gaping mouth! (Sasmirella is really coming "up" out of the Ethereal Plane.) Unless the character is in the Ethereal Plane as well, Sasmirella's attack surprises him on a roll of 1-5 on 1d6. Sasmirella strikes at the character and uses her gaze attack before beginning to weave her ectoplasmic net. If the character's companions rush to his aid, Sasmirella uses her second wail attack (the first was the wailing moan the adventurers heard out on the moor). Everyone in range must make a Saving Throw vs. Spells or age 10-40 years. See the *Dungeon Masters Companion*, pages 32-33, for details on the effects of a haunt's aging attack.

Sasmirella fights fiercely to defend the entrance to the tomb, but if things go badly against her, she uses her final

wail attack and flees to the Ethereal Plane so that she may continue to haunt the moor.

Once the PCs defeat Sasmirella (either destroying her or driving her off), give them the following information:

The top of the mound is relatively flat, covered with the thick, coarse grass common on the moors. The stone pillars are cracked and weathered, covered with brown and gray lichen. None of them bear any distinctive marks.

If the PCs carefully search the area, they can find a potion of *ethereality* and an emerald necklace valued at 5,000 gp craftily hidden in a clump of grass beside one of the standing stones. These were gifts from Annakarr for Sasmirella's service. The PCs may use the potion to send someone into the Ethereal Plane to rescue any party members ensnared in Sasmirella's ectoplasmic net.

In the approximate center of the barrow top, a gaping hole plunges down into darkness. Torchlight at the mouth of this 4'-diameter hole reveals a rough tunnel descending into the barrow at a

50° angle. The sides of the tunnel are of loose, damp earth, making descent by anyone without climbing ability sheer folly. The earth-walled tunnel seems to go down for 8' before passing through 6' of jagged rock. Past this point, the tunnel appears to open into a chamber of indiscernible proportions. Those peering down into the darkness can make out jumbled stone blocks 20'-25' below. Infravision provides even less information, showing only that all below is cold and motionless. A *light* spell shows the PCs little more. Dropping a torch or similar light source briefly illuminates the layer of stone that forms the ceiling and then the jumbled blocks on the floor before it is quickly extinguished in a dark pool of water on the floor of the chamber.

By attaching a rope to one of the standing stones, the PCs should have little trouble climbing down into the chamber below.

1. Entry Chamber. The following description should be given to the players when their characters enter the barrow:

> You stand in a damp, domed chamber approximately 20' in diameter and 12' high at its highest point. The floor is earth, and a small pile of jumbled stone blocks lies in a shallow pool of water beneath the gaping hole in the ceiling. Small wooden doors with ornate bronze hinges face north and east. To the south, a 5' wide by 5' high passage slants upward. The northern door is locked with a shiny metal padlock of unusual design, having two keyholes. The western portion of the chamber is shrouded in impenetrable darkness.
>
> Deathly silence commands the barrow, except for the occasional soft tap of water falling into the pool from the outside.

The darkness hiding the western quarter of the chamber from view is caused by a *continual darkness* spell. Annakarr cast this spell to hide those who guard the entry into the barrow.

After the PCs have had a moment to glance around the room, Annakarr's two guardians step out from the shadows of the spell. The two guardians are bone golems, each with four swords.

Bone golems (2): AC 2; HD 6*; hp 54, 50; #AT 4; Dmg by weapon type; MV 120' (40'); ML 12; AL N; XP 500; ER/50 (Golem). These creatures may each attack up to two opponents and are immune to fire, cold, and electrical attacks.

If the PCs dispel the darkness, they can see a small, wooden door identical to the ones facing north and east. But the door in the western wall stands half open. There is nothing of value in this chamber.

After the party defeats the bone golems, the adventurers hear the faint howl of a lone wolf out on the moor. Thoughts of Sergei out on the moor alone may creep across their minds.

2. Original Entrance/Dead End. This short passage slants noticeably upward and ends in a wall of rough rock set with now-dusty mortar. If the PCs spend a few minutes removing blocks from the wall, they find a small metal chest shoved into a narrow hole in the earthen wall behind the rock. If the PCs show even the slightest incentive in studying the chest, they realize that it does not show any signs of age or decay. It hardly seems possible that it could have been placed here 2,000 years ago. The space in which the chest is crammed, however, is too small to open the lid, so the chest must be removed to open it.

Behind the chest, coiled in the dark, lie three pit vipers. Unless the PCs are specifically watching for something behind the chest, they are automatically surprised by the serpents lashing out as the chest is being lowered to the ground.

Pit vipers (3): AC 6; HD 2*; hp 12, 10, 15; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1-4 plus poison; MV 90' (30'); Save F1; ML 7; AL N; XP 25; BD/37 (Snake).

The starving vipers have been crammed in the hole for several days now and want only to make a hasty escape. The snakes strike out from the hole at the first opportunity, then try to make a break for the entry chamber as they continue to strike at anyone they pass. Serpents that are cornered will continue to strike until slain.

Once the vipers are dealt with, the PCs can get on with examining the chest, which was put here by Annakarr to distract and harm the unwary. It is locked and trapped with a poison needle (Save vs. Poison to avoid death in 2-5 rounds).

The chest is filled with a dozen large rocks and a batch of yellow mold that, after being jostled around as the PCs lowered the chest to the ground, bursts forth a huge cloud of spores that fills the entrance.

Yellow mold: AC not applicable; HD 2*; hp 14; #AT spores; Dmg 1-6 plus choking spores; MV 0'; Save F2; ML not applicable; AL N; XP 25; BD/39.

3. Western Tomb. This room and the entire length of passage leading to it, including part of the entry chamber (area 1), are under the effects of a *continual darkness* spell. As the PCs battle the bone golems in the entry chamber, the creatures within this room are setting up their trap.

If the PCs dispel the magical darkness so that they can view the contents of this chamber, they see the following:

> The narrow passage beyond the small door is short and slopes gently downward. At its end is a domed chamber slightly smaller than the chamber through which you entered the barrow. In the center of the chamber are two stone slabs, each about 6' long, 3' wide, and 2' high. Upon each of these slabs lies the dusty remains of a body dressed in tattered cloth. The corpses wear ancient-looking tarnished bronze breastplates, and their heads are covered by great helmets. Warped and decayed shields cover their feet, and each clasps a short bronze sword at his breast. All around the chamber lie huge vases and urns, rotting chests, and several ancient weapons.
>
> Straddling the stone biers is an inky figure: a stunted, vicious-looking man-thing with an evil grimace and long bony claws. Through the creature, you can vaguely make out the far wall of the room.
>
> As you look upon this horrifying sight, a wispy, chilling mist begins to swirl about the room.

This room currently houses a motley band of undead, followers of Annakarr. The creature straddling the stone slabs is an apparition that, to Annakarr's glee, had been haunting the barrow for several decades and was quite willing to join the patriarch. Annakarr quickly put the apparition in command of the rest of his undead entourage. Hiding behind and beneath the various con-

tents of the tomb are the tortured souls who were attracted to (or doomed within) Annakarr's Temple of Chaos. These creatures include eight wights and two wraiths, one of which (hp 25) hides in a huge urn near the doorway, putting him behind the party if they enter the room. The two figures lying on the slabs are mummies, ready to rise to the attack.

Apparition: AC 0; HD 10***; hp 53; #AT 2 claws; Dmg 3-8/3-8; MV 180' (60'; Save MU10; ML 10; AL C; XP 3,000; CD/35 (Phantom).

Wights (8): AC 5; HD 3*; hp 20 (×2), 18, 17, 16, 15, 14 (×2); #AT 1; Dmg energy drain; MV 90' (30'); Save F3; ML 12; AL C; XP 50; BD/39.

Wraith (2): AC 3; HD 4**; hp 30, 25; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 plus energy drain; MV 120' (40'), flying: 240' (80'); Save F4; ML 12; AL C; XP 175; ER/57.

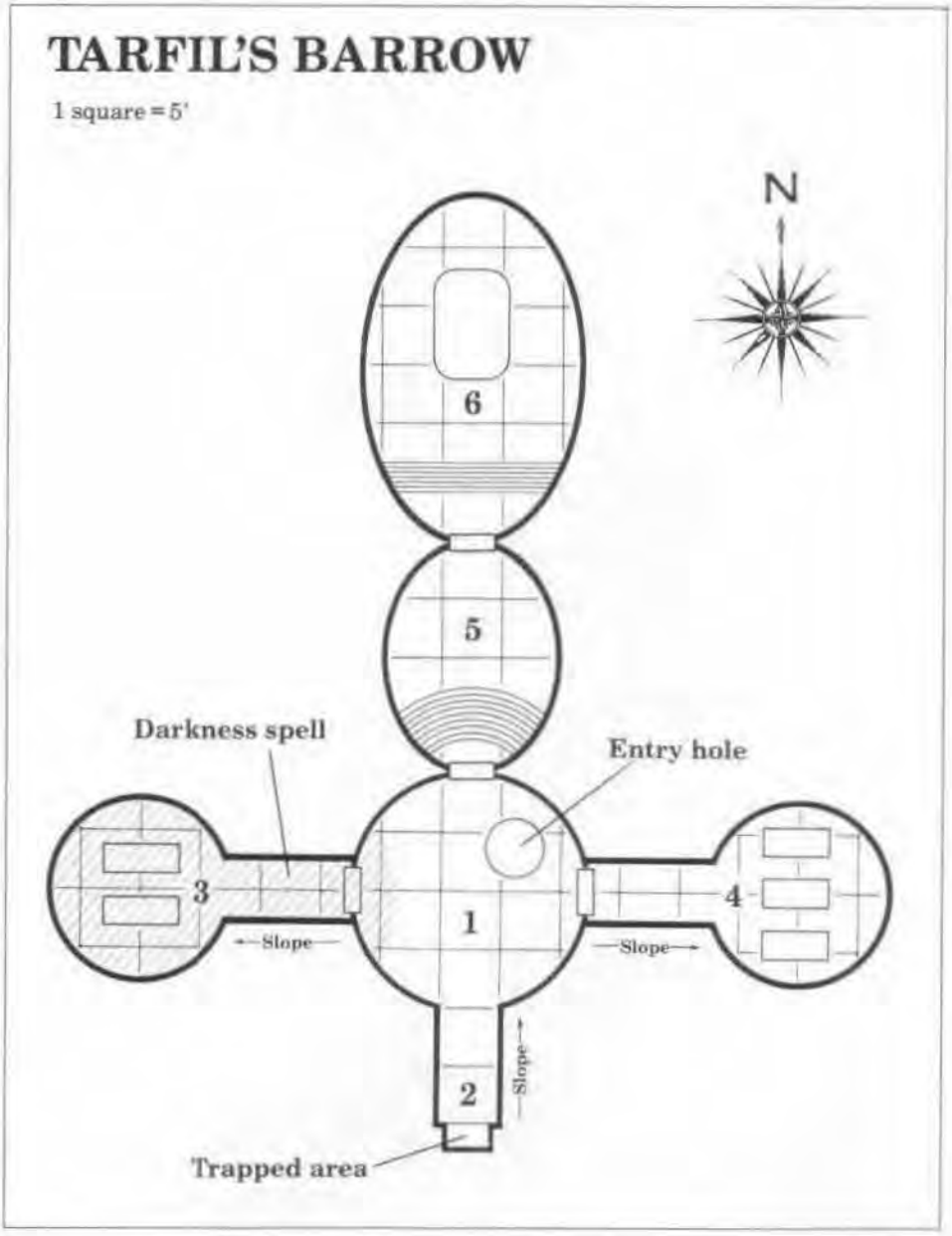
Mummies (2): AC 3; HD 5+1**; hp 33, 25; #AT 1 touch; Dmg 1-12 plus disease; MV 60' (20'); Save F5; ML 12; AL C; XP 575; ER/54. Do not forget their paralyzing fear effects.

As the party enters this room, the apparition begins the creation of its deadly mist, which will fill the chamber and a good portion of the entry hall within one round (maximum extent: 10' high, 20' radius). Everyone within the room or several feet into the entry tunnel must make a Saving Throw vs. Spells or be *entranced*, standing helpless before the swarm of undead. Those remaining within the mist must save each round until the mist vanishes in 12 rounds. As soon as at least one PC is *entranced*, the apparition materializes and attack the helpless adventurer.

When the apparition materializes, the mummies sit up from the slabs and the wights and wraiths rise up from their hiding places among the shadows and debris.

The undead will not pursue the party beyond the door of the chamber. Should the PCs venture into the room under the effect of the magical darkness, the undead attack will come in much the same fashion but without the theatrics and the PC's knowledge of their fate!

The room is filled with rotting chests and large clay vessels, all filled with long-decayed foodstuffs and moldering garments. The remains of an ancient chariot stand among the wreckage. Upon the wall hang six crossed battle axes of a viciously hooked design, and from one of these hangs a silver key on a leather thong. This is one of the two



keys that are required to open the special padlock to the northern tomb. On the floor beneath the battle axes sits a chest that contains the skulls of eight of the gnoll-beastmen.

If a party member carefully searches around the stone biers, he notices that the earthen floor of the chamber has been disturbed near the head end of the southern slab. If the slab is pushed aside or overturned (requiring a combined strength of 50 or more), the adventurers discover the monsters' treasure cached in a small hole. The following items are located there: a small electrum wolf's-head brooch (worth 1,000 gp); a plain platinum arm band (worth 2,000 gp); an ornate gold and platinum crown, crafted in the form of intertwined oak leaves (worth 10,000 gp); a *wand of magic detection* (20 charges); a scroll of *creation*; and three potions (*green dragon control, undead control, antidote*).

4. Eastern Tomb. If someone in the party successfully listens at the door to this tomb, he hears faint, deep-throated laughter. After the PCs open the door, describe the following scene to them:

From the doorway, torchlight flickers on the walls of the short passage that slopes down into a chamber of indiscernible size. Harsh voices and vulgar laughter echo up from the room below.

When the party has traveled the short corridor, give the PCs the following description:

Two smoldering torches illuminate a chamber somewhat smaller than the entry area. The center of the room contains three stone slabs upon which sit four brutish warriors with shaggy hair and wild eyes. All the warriors are clad in plaid kilts and leather vests.

The center of attention seems to be the largest of the warriors, every bit of 7' tall, who is sitting on the central slab, holding up a giant rat by its tail, and teasing it with the point of a dagger. Two warriors are sitting on the northern slab, each with a battle axe in hand and a bastard sword nearby. The fourth warrior sits on the southern slab, toying with a two-handed sword. A second sword is strapped to his back.

If the PCs draw any attention to themselves when they look into this room, the largest warrior looks up from his sport. "I grow tired of battling rodents. Are there any among ye worthy of a fight?" he challenges. With that he hurls the rat at the PCs and grabs two hefty maces from beside him on the stone bier. This is the signal for all four warriors to leap to the attack with bloodcurdling screams.

The four warriors are actually mujina mercenaries hired by Annakarr. The mujina fight ferociously and will pursue a weakened party to the barrow top if the PCs leave them some means by which to climb out.

Mujina (4): AC 4; HD 8*; hp 58, 50, 45, 43; #AT 2 weapons plus special; Dmg by weapon type plus fear; MV 120' (40'); Save F8; ML 9; AL C; XP 1,750; CD/34.

The only items of value in this room are carried by the monsters. Of the two armed with sword and axe, one wears a jewelled arm band valued at 3,000 gp, and the other has a pouch containing five gems (1,000 gp (×2), 500 gp (×2), 100 gp). The third mujina has a *bag of holding* that contains 5,000 gp in gold coin, plate, and bars. The largest of the group bears the second key required to open the north door in area 1. This key is gold and is strung on a leather thong around his neck. His dagger is a *dagger +2/+4 vs. undead.*

5. Antechamber. As mentioned earlier, the door to this chamber is locked by a very powerful and quasi-magical padlock. The lock was crafted by a long-dead dwarflike race, and the knowledge and power to make such a lock is now lost.

This lock has two keyholes and can be opened only with the two keys found in areas 3 and 4. Without these keys, entrance to Tarfil's tomb is impossible. Besides, if the PCs are too weak to defeat Annakarr's henchcreatures and attain possession of the keys, how could they possibly hope to overcome the beings behind this door?

The lock is immune to any thief's attempt to pick it, although trying to do so has no ill effects. This special padlock empowers whatever it locks (in this case the door, hinges, frame, and all) with the equivalent of 750 hp of resiliency. This strength is by no means permanent. It is in effect only while the lock is attached and properly fastened. In addition, the lock is immune to the effects of *knock* spells and any other magics except a *wish*. As said before, only the two keys may open the lock. If someone decides to take the lock, it may be sold for 5,000 gp or more if the right buyer can be found. Those interested in such a lock include wealthy nobles and merchants, dwarven craftsmen of great skill, and powerful mages. Of course, the powers of the lock are not reproducible, nor are copies of its keys. If nothing else, it could provide an adventurer with a very safe way of protecting his valuables, providing that he doesn't misplace the keys.

Once the lock is open, the door swings open easily. When the PCs enter the chamber beyond, read the following to the players:

The room beyond the padlocked door is dimly illuminated by two lanterns whose wicks have been trimmed very low. You stand on the landing of a short flight of stairs that leads down to the floor 10' below. The oval-shaped room is 15' wide and 20' long, with a 20'-high ceiling. Hovering in the center of the room near the far end, about 10' off the floor, is a scaled, sphere-shaped creature approximately 4' in diameter, with a gaping maw, one huge eye, and a multitude of short stalks sprouting in a ring around its top.

The grinning monstrosity is a beholder who has allied itself with Annakarr to further its own twisted ends. Annakarr placed it here to act as a final defense against any intrusion in his work.

Beholder: AC 0/2/7; HD 11*****; hp 50/20/12; #AT 1 bite plus special; Dmg 2-16 plus special; MV 30' (10'); Save MU11; ML 12; AL C; XP 5,100; CD/28.

The monster immediately attacks anything that enters the room. The monster tries to hold a position in the center of the room, about 10' or 12' off the floor, and uses as many of its eyes as possible against the intruders. If the beholder's safety appears severely threatened, and if someone attempts to parley, it may offer to allow the party to pass in exchange for 5,000 gp in gems or two scrolls or potions. If the party accepts such terms, the beholder asks that the items be put in a pouch or sack. It then takes up the parcel in its mouth and leaves the tomb. The beholder certainly doesn't feel it owes Annakarr its life.

This room is filled with chests, coffers, and urns, most of which are brimming over with copper and silver (30,000 cp and 19,000 sp). There is also one large urn containing 2,000 gp. A rack of weapons, containing mostly rusted spears, swords, and axes, stands against the west wall. One spear, however, bears no sign of its age except the ancient carvings engraved in its haft. It is a *spear +3, returning.*

6. Tarfil's Tomb. Beyond the antechamber guarded by the "sphere of many eyes" lies the final (?) resting place of Tarfil, warlord of the ancient Traldar. Double doors covered with bronze plate bar entry to the chamber in which Annakarr and his minions work the spell to bind Tarfil's soul to their evil will. Etched into the bronze of the doors are runes in the tongue of ancient Traldar that read: "Herein lies Tarfil Tarfun's son, who fell glorious in battle and rests in everlasting peace

amongst the gods." Carved in bas-relief on either side of the portal are stone figures, warriors in horse-tail-plumed helmets, holding short swords at attention before their breastplates. The bolt to the doors is unfastened, but the doors themselves have been enchanted with a *hold portal* spell, cast at 11th level.

If the PCs have no magical means to pass beyond these doors, it will require 200 hp of damage to destroy the doors by hammer and axe, though axes used will be quickly blunted by the bronze plating and severely impaired for use in battle. If someone successfully listens at the doors, he can hear a monotonous chanting. As the party member listens, the chant begins to increase in intensity and pitch. Shortly thereafter, the sound becomes discernable by everyone in the antechamber. The spell being cast within is approaching its climax.

Even if the PCs must break down the doors, the chanting will continue. Annakarr is too close to his goal to stop now. When the adventurers enter the room, either by overpowering the magics on the doors or by battering their way through, give them the following description:

> The room beyond the bronze doors is smoky and dimly lit by several lanterns and two large candelabra holding thick black candles. The oval chamber is 30' long and 20' wide. Five feet inside the doors, wide stone steps lead down 3' to a lower level of the floor. The ceiling height is approximately 12' where you stand and 15' on the main floor.
>
> Standing at the top of the stairs are three grossly fat, grim-faced men, each bearing a huge pole axe raised menacingly above his head. The fat men are dressed in leather jerkins and breeches, but are dirty and reek of filth. On each of their faces you can see an evil leer, their teeth seeming almost tusklike in the dim light.
>
> Beyond these monsters, six humans stand chanting in a half circle around an open sarcophagus, their attention fixed upon a maroon-robed man holding aloft a blood-red candle in one hand and an ancient tome in the other. Above the sarcophagus, a swirling, sickly green mist is rapidly forming. Another man, dressed in long robes covered in glyphs, is gesturing dramatically. Just as you enter, a wall of translucent ice forms at the foot of the stairs, shooting up toward the ceiling and sealing off most of the chamber.

Regardless of how long the PCs have spent elsewhere in the barrow, they enter Tarfil's tomb just as the spell of binding nears success. The three creatures at the door are devil swine who have been enlisted by Annakarr to fight for Chaos.

Devil swine (3): AC 3 (9); HD 9*; hp 46, 45, 42; #AT 1 gore or weapon; Dmg 2-12 or by weapon type; MV 180' (60'), human form 120' (40'); Save F9; ML 10; AL C; XP 1,600; ER/48.

When the party enters the room, the devil swine are in human form, but each round thereafter one of the swine drops to the floor and transforms into a huge hog. Each devil swine may make up to three special *charm person* attacks per day, with the victim saving at −2.

The man in the glyph-embroidered robes is Cargilon Darkbringer, a wizard who has been watching the PCs through a *crystal ball* since they entered the barrow. Knowing that they were about

to enter the chamber, he began casting a *wall of ice* spell to prevent the party from disrupting the incantation.

Cargilon Darkbringer: AC 1 (with ring and *shield*); MU 11; hp 30; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; MV 120' (40'); Save MU11; ML 10; AL C; I 17; XP 2,700. Cargilon possesses a *dagger +2*, a *crystal ball*, a *ring of protection +3*, and a potion of *healing*. He has just finished imbibing a potion of *sight* and casting *shield* and *detect invisible* spells on himself, as well as casting the *wall of ice* spell and a protective spell on Annakar the Conquerer (see following). Cargilon has the following spells memorized: *charm person, magic missile (×2), invisibility, continual darkness, web, fireball, lightning bolt, confusion, polymorph other, feeblemind, teleport.*

Gathered around the sarcophagus are Annakarr and his followers. For nearly a fortnight they have worked in shifts, two or three at a time, invoking the powers of Chaos to bind Tarfil's soul. While not chanting the incantation, they prayed, ate, and slept, never leaving the tomb. As Tarfil's spirit began to weaken, they gradually increased the intensity of their chant until all seven of them joined in 20 hours ago, focusing their combined power against the Traladar warlord. Now the five lesser clerics are exhausted, not being powerful enough to sustain their physical strength, and have a gaunt look about them. Lodigris the Wicked, a Chaotic lama converted to Annakarr's beliefs long ago, has retained much of his strength due to his faith. Still, only Annakarr bears no sign of physical strain, having drawn a great deal of his power directly from the *Tome of Binding Souls*, a powerful relic of Chaos.

Lesser clerics of Chaos (3): AC 3; C3; hp 15, 12, 10; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; MV 60' (20') from exhaustion and encumbrance; Save C3; ML 11; AL C; XP 50. These clerics wear plate mail beneath their robes, and each is armed with a *mace +1*. Although their weakened condition has no effect on their combat abilities due to their religious fanaticism, none of them has the power left to cast spells. Each wears a platinum chain worth 200 gp.

Elders of Chaos (2): AC 2; C6; hp 32, 25; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; MV 60' (20') from exhaustion and encumbrance; ML 11; AL C; W 16; XP 725. These men are not quite as drained as their lesser brethren, and they still have the ability to cast some spells. The stronger of the pair wears *plate mail +1* and bears a *staff of striking* with 20 charges. He has a *cause light wounds* and a *fear* spell available. The other wears plate mail and a *ring of protection +1*, carries a *snake staff* and can cast *cause light wounds* and *hold person* spells. These men each wear large gold holy symbols (Chaotic) valued at 1,000 gp apiece.

Lodigris the Wicked, lama of Chaos: AC 1; C8; hp 36; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; MV 60' (20'); Save C8; ML 11; AL C; S 16, W 17; XP 1,750. Lodigris has *plate mail +2*, a *mace +3*, and a potion of *giant strength*. He also has the following spells at his disposal: *light, hold person, silence 15' radius, poison, finger of death*. Lodigris has a ruby necklace valued at 900 gp and a key to the iron chest near the back of the chamber.

Annakarr the Conqueror, patriarch of Chaos: AC −2; C13; hp 50; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; MV 60' (20'); Save C13; ML 12; AL C; I 17, W 18, C 16; XP 3,250. Annakarr wears *plate mail of gaseous form +3* and wields a *mace of slowing +3*. He also wears a *ring of spell turning* and is under the effect of a *protection from normal missiles* spell recently cast upon him by Cargilon Darkbringer. Annakarr has the following spells available: *cause fear* (×2), *cure light wounds* (×3), *hold person* (×3), *bless, blight, continual darkness* (×2); *curse* (×2), *poison, cure serious wounds, cause serious wounds, cure critical wounds* (×2), *barrier* (×2). Annakarr wears a jewelled pendant worth 5,000 gp and four finger rings valued at 1,200 gp, 500 gp, 250 gp, and 50 gp. 'The Conqueror' is Annakarr's self-given (and somewhat premature) title.

The round after the PCs enter the chamber, the three lesser priests break off from the incantation, as it is in its final stages and they are no longer needed for its completion. As soon as the *wall of ice* is destroyed, they rush the party. On the following round, the two Elders break off as well, as does Lodigris on the round thereafter. Once the PCs have entered the chamber, the only way to reverse the spell before its completion is by slaying Annakarr, an occurrence his followers are willing to give their lives to prevent.

For the first three rounds, the PCs may notice that the green mist is thickening, swirling with greater and greater intensity. On the fourth round it takes the form of a man, emanating a luminous green light that floods the chamber with an unwholesome emerald hue. Floating above the sarcophagus, the spirit appears just as described by Ivan Sumanov, with the presence and bearing of a man who in life possessed great strength and a powerful personal aura.

As he takes shape, Tarfil looks at the PCs, and upon his face they may see a look of tragic sorrow, as though the spirit already felt great remorse for the wrongs he must commit against humanity. But as the adventurers continue to battle the minions of Annakarr, a dramatic change comes over the countenance of the spirit that was Tarfil Tarfun's son. The look of sorrow shifts to a menacing grimace, and evil seems to permeate the air of the chamber, magnified by the sickening emerald glow.

Annakarr speaks words of great power. On round five after the party's entrance, the Traldar ghost raises his spear and charges the strongest looking warrior in the party, running across the air as though it were soft turf. From this point on (round six and beyond), Annakarr is also free to join the melee.

Spirit of Tarfil, warlord of ancient Traldar: AC −2; HD 14; hp 75; #AT 2; Dmg 4-14/4-14; MV 120' (40'); Save F14; ML 12; AL C; XP 3,500.

Tarfil appears much as he did in life, dressed in the helmet, breastplate, and greaves of his ancient civilization and carrying his great spear and leathered warboard. The fighter whom Tarfil's spirit has marked for single combat must make a Saving Throw vs. Spells every round or be affected as if by a *fear* spell. Tarfil ignores all others until the one he has challenged lies slain. (Other PCs who attack Tarfil at this time need not make Saving Throws.)

All the agents of Chaos in this room fight to the best of their abilities, using spells aggressively and sparing no magical items. Annakarr has come too far in his grand scheme and will not see it ruined now by a handful of would-be heroes.

In order to control Tarfil, Annakarr must stay alive and retain possession of the *Tome of Binding Souls*. He fights with the book grasped in one hand and his mace in the other. Should anyone manage to wrest the book from Annakarr, the spell is broken. Treat such an

attempt as a wrestling attack (*Players Companion*, pages 6-7), giving Annakarr the initiative to strike first with his mace each time (he has a wrestling rating of 10). To take the book away requires beating Annakarr by 10 or more on a wrestling roll. If the PC beats Annakarr by less than 10, however, he needs best Annakarr by only 8 on his next attempt, provided that Annakarr does not hit the PC with his mace before the PC attempts his next wrestling roll.

Should the tome be taken from Annakarr, Tarfil's spirit howls with delight. Tarfil immediately attacks Annakarr, ignoring his previous opponent. Annakarr fights back desperately, but he no longer has any magical power over the spirit and is no match for Tarfil in battle. Upon the death of Annakarr, whether by Tarfil's spear or at the hands of the PCs, Tarfil's shade fades away, looking extremely satisfied and smiling at the PCs, even if they are still engaged with Annakarr's followers.

Should the spell be broken and all three of the higher-level clerics slain, Annakarr's minions run for the surface, hoping to escape with their lives. Only Lodigris will give no quarter, fighting to the last. If, of the high-level clerics, only Lodigris lives, he attempts to rally the other human clerics. Cargilon will cast a *continual darkness* spell and flee by *teleporting* away should the battle look hopeless.

If Tarfil's spirit is banished and the Chaotic priests are being soundly beaten, Annakarr screams curses at the PCs and vows to hunt them down along with their families and friends to see that they all die horrible deaths. Then, screaming hysterically for his minions to slay the PCs in the name of Chaos, Annakarr transforms into a *gaseous cloud* and flees the barrow, determined to someday be avenged.

Near the rear of the chamber is a small locked iron chest, to which Lodigris has the key. It is trapped with four poisoned darts and contains a clerical scroll with three spells (*raise dead fully, restore, cureall*) and 1,000 pp. This is Annakarr's "traveling money." Also in the chamber are several chests partially filled with rations, and three casks, one containing wine and two filled with water. All the casks have been broached, but the food and water are palatable and the wine is exceptionally good.

Leaving the Barrow

When the PCs finally exit the barrow, they are greeted by a pale dawn, the yellow sun just peeking over the eastern mountains. To the west, they see Sergei leading their string of horses along the small brook. He stops at the base of the mound, saying, "M'lords, I knew that ye were successful, for the dark clouds that have hung over the land for weeks suddenly boiled and churned and raced away to the south, leaving behind this beautiful dawn. I deem you have done a great thing for Traladara today."

Continued on page 38

The Tome of Binding Souls

Bound in demon hide, this item is a small, thick book roughly 9" high, 6" wide, and 1½" thick. It strongly radiates a pulsing aura of evil, noticeable even without magical detection. Its worn pages of thin flesh are covered with strange sigils and glyphs. Merely looking at the tome's evil writings will cause any non-Chaotic being to take 3-18 hp electrical damage and make a Saving Throw vs. Spells or go insane. The form that this insanity takes is left for the DM to decide, but requires the casting of a *cureall* spell by a cleric of 18th level or higher to dispel. Any non-Chaotic being who retains the book in his possession for more than three days will suffer from a vile rotting disease, as that caused by a mummy, with no save allowed. The curing of this effect requires the casting of a *cure disease* spell, also by a cleric of 18th or higher level.

The tome is a relic that contains the knowledge and power to ensnare the soul of a deceased being and bind it to one's will. The captured soul manifests itself in a form similar to that of a ghost, except that its hit dice are equal to that which it possessed in life. This spirit-ghost is completely under the power of the tome's user.

The tome is written in an archaic form of the Chaotic alignment language and can be fully understood only by a Chaotic cleric of at least 10th level, although such a cleric may then pass on some of this knowledge to others. These followers can then add their power to the cleric's own to increase the strength of the incantation.

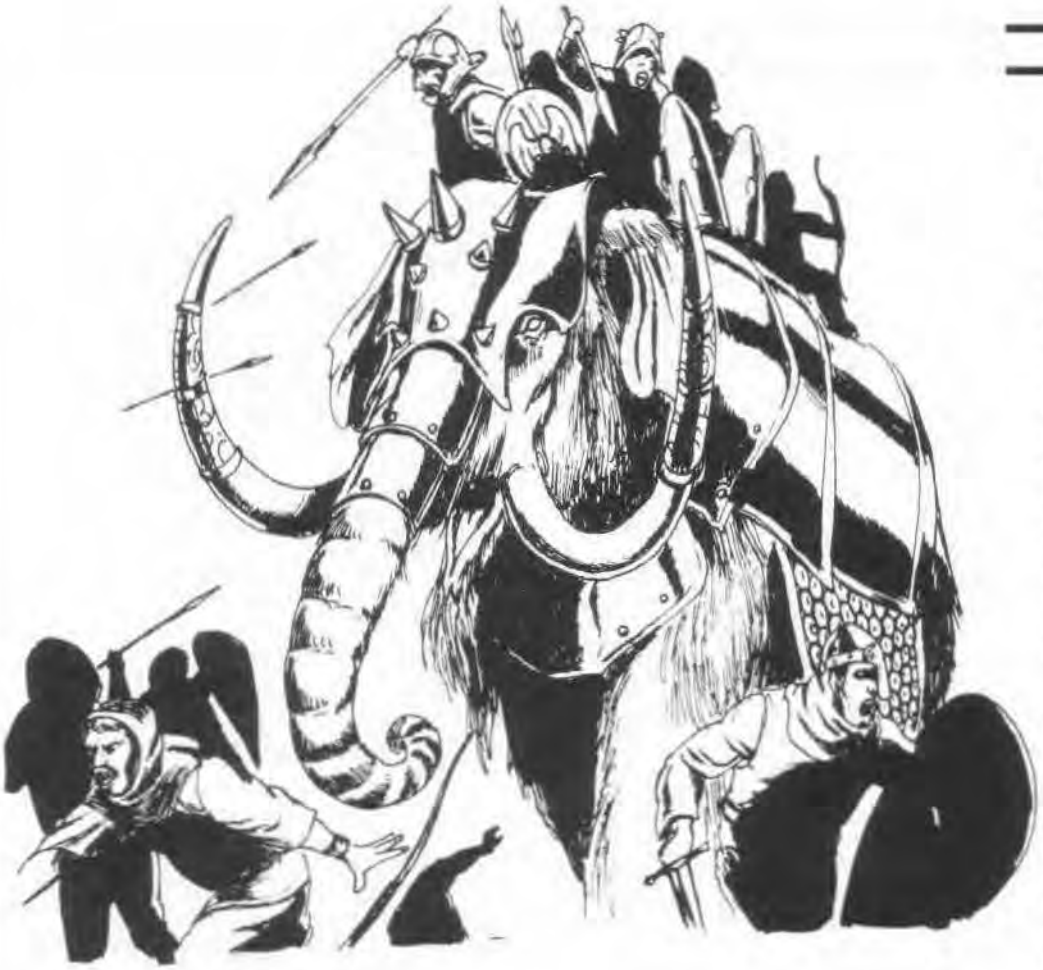
The casting of the incantation requires that the spell be cast over the remains of the soul's former body, and that the caster know the spirit's name. Success of the incantation begins at a base 1% chance, rolled once every 12 hours of the incantation. This chance is modified by the following: For every level of the spirit, subtract 2%. For every level of the caster (and those of any assistants chanting at the same), add 1%. Lastly, add 1% for each 12-hour period in which the incantation has been in progress.

Should the incantation be interrupted or halted at any time, all progress made to that point is lost, and any new attempts to ensnare the soul begin at the base 1% chance again. Also, should a 99% or greater (unmodified) chance be rolled in any ensnaring attempt, the soul eludes his pursuers (fell hounds from the Abyss) and breaks the spell's hold. This has the same effect as breaking off the incantation.

Once ensnared, however, there is little hope for the spirit, as the power of the tome quickly binds it to a material form from which escape occurs only when its new form is destroyed or when the caster loses control of the tome. This doesn't mean that the caster must sleep with the tome clutched to his breast, but it does require that the book always be in a place of the caster's choosing and accessible to him.

Should the caster lose control of the tome, the spirit becomes free to direct all its energies toward the death of its captor, attacking until destroyed or the caster is killed, at which point the spirit is allowed to return to its final plane of existence.

The tome is immune to normal and most magical destruction, such as burning or ripping. It must be destroyed by some special means, such as being thrown into a particular volcano, perhaps on the Elemental Plane of Fire, or by immersion in the acidic blood of some huge ancient black dragon. The particular means of the tome's destruction are left to the DM and could provide an exciting and dangerous quest.



JUGGERNAUT

BY ROGER E. MOORE

Traffic is sometimes very heavy at night.

Artwork by Jim Holloway

Roger E. Moore is the editor of DRAGON® Magazine and offered to write a two-page mini-adventure. We may give him another chance.

"Juggernaut" is an AD&D® 2nd Edition scenario for 5-8 characters of 4th to 7th level (about 33 total levels). The players should be willing to find unique ways of dealing with a dangerous problem that could overwhelm them in direct hand-to-hand combat. This brief scenario may be dropped into any ongoing campaign; it takes place along a wilderness stretch of a major overland trade route. The "Adventure Background" may be changed to reflect the circumstances of the current game campaign, thus connecting this encounter with a setting already involving goblins.

Adventure Background

Sub-chief Konkar looked down at the carved marble object he had pulled free from the still-smoking ruins of the chest. His eyes ran from the stench of burned flesh and baked leather, the remains of the overeager goblins who had unlatched the chest before the shaman could check it for the usual clever magical traps. The explosion had blown all the doors loose in this section of the dungeon and reduced the scouting party's numbers by three. *Not that we needed the weak and the stupid among our numbers anyway,* reflected Konkar, turning the sooty object over in his dark-red hands.

The object appeared to be a statuette of some remarkable beast: a massive, thick-bodied, four-legged creature the likes of which Konkar could scarcely imagine. It seemed to have a long nose or arm projecting from its face, with huge teeth or horns to either side of the nose. *A demon, no doubt,* he thought. *Dizaker will want to see it. He'll also want to take it away for "further study," and I'll finally have an excuse to cut that arrogant shaman's hands off at the wrists.* Considerably cheered, Konkar strode from the smoke-filled room and left his troops to their thorough and emotionless looting.

He found Dizaker at the entrance to the newly discovered dungeon complex. The pile of bodies tossed to the side of the entryway showed that now six more goblins had fallen victim to the various charms of this old tomb. Dizaker's eyes narrowed when he saw the sub-chief

approach with the smooth marble carving in his hands, and the shaman held out a yellow-green palm to take it.

Konkar laughed. "The hands that grasp are the hands that keep, Godservant. This will make a fine souvenir of our visit, a charm that doubles as a whetstone. Perhaps you could polish it for me when you have the time."

A muscle twitched in Dizaker's scarred right cheek. "You lack respect for your betters, *Sub*-chief. Your foray into this worthless ruin has cost us over a handful of warriors, lives that could have been better spent slaying human vermin. We were sent here to find new lands for our people, not to waste time and blood looking for treasure. Give that worthless trinket over and finish your duties."

The smile on Konkar's face pulled back until all of his daggerlike teeth could be seen. Yellow flames burned in his eyes. "You will breed with dwarves before you take this prize from me," he said slowly. "This is a statue of a demon, and it will be my own. And you lack respect for *your* betters, Godservant. Your place is to support me, not to give me orders."

"I'll give you orders when I see fit!" shrieked Dizaker, showing all of his rotting fangs. His fingers wrapped themselves around the leather-banded hilt of his stone-headed mace. "I serve the Lord of the Depths and Darkness, the Mighty One who is our creator, not a petty officer who sends his goblins away to be slain on a whim!"

Weeks of frustration and hatred boiled over in an instant. Konkar whirled and set the marble statue aside on the ground. In the same motion, he pulled his sword free and faced Dizaker, his brick-red face swollen with rage. The dozen or so goblin soldiers who had drawn closer to hear the argument now pulled back from harm's way, still staying within earshot to catch every detail of this long-expected and too-long-delayed showdown.

"When you get to the Hells," Konkar roared, "tell them you were sent there by *Konkar!*" Gripping the sword with both hands and scorning his shield, Konkar whipped his blade over his head and lashed out at the shaman. *He knows only one spell,* Konkar thought, *and the coward probably picked one to heal his wounds. He'll need it—and dozens more.*

The shaman was equally fast, however, and his mace blocked the downward slash of the sword. Splinters and sparks flew from the weapons as they clanged and flew apart. Konkar twisted his grip and brought the sword back, and again Dizaker blocked the strike—but something else was happening. The shaman now looked at Konkar—no, he was looking *behind* Konkar—with open terror, backpedaling for all he was worth. Konkar advanced. *A pitiable trick from a wretch of a Godservant!*

"Great Lord of Darkness!" howled the shaman, dropping his mace and falling backward over a stone. *The fool tripped! But he's not faking his fear,* the sub-chief realized suddenly. Konkar was also suddenly aware that all of his goblin soldiers were screaming now, and they were all looking behind him, too, pointing with round, wide eyes and drawn weapons.

He whirled, braced for an attack from this new threat or from the cowardly shaman. The blood in his veins froze when his gaze fell upon the statuette—at least, it must have once been the statuette. Now it was growing.

Never run! was the first thought that flashed though the sub-chief's mind. *Never run from anything!* Yet he shook like a newborn worg cub as the black marble carving arose to the size of a great dog, now a horse, now to a mighty shape that towered above him like the Lord of the Depths and Darkness himself. The demon was covered with black shaggy hair, and all of the features of the original statuette were now revealed in their horrific glory. Two giant horns that could each spit a worg stuck out from the monster's face over its mouth, and a snakelike limb coiled and uncoiled itself between them.

Abruptly the monster stopped growing at a fantastic height. It looked like it must weigh as much as a mountain. A thick animal odor drifted from it. The monster turned its head and fixed Konkar with a tiny, gleaming black eye.

**You have called me to life*" came a slow, alien voice inside Konkar's head. "*What is your command?*"

For perhaps half a minute, the sub-chief said nothing. His fingers ached from the grip on his useless sword. He studied the creature, examining it and waiting for any move. And he digested the demon's words with growing awareness.

Slowly Konkar straightened his back. The tip of his sword fell until it touched the ground. The goblin carefully cleared his throat before he spoke.

"You obey me," he said, making it half a question.

"*Yes. Unto death.*" The demon's tiny eye blinked calmly.

Wild emotion began to grow inside Konkar. He almost stepped back. It was too much to believe. His own demon! Konkar turned and glanced at his troops, the few who had not run away. And his gaze fell on Dizaker, who crouched on the ground with his bony arms raised over his head in a craven gesture.

Konkar looked back at the demon. "You obey only *me*, demon!" he said more loudly. "You will always obey only *me*! I am your master!"

The monster's black eye seemed to wink. "*Yes, for as long as you own the stone.*"

Konkar turned again to look at his troops. More were filtering back now, weapons still raised but their fiery eyes fixed solidly on their sub-chief.

"I have subdued this demon!" shouted Konkar, raising his arms over his head. "It is now my demon!" He glanced at Dizaker's terror-filled face, then looked back at the shaggy monster and pointed at the shaman. "And I now command you to slay this traitor!"

The massive head nodded once. "*As you wish.*" The titanic beast shifted, then moved forward. It stepped slightly sideways to avoid the sub-chief, then strode like a walking mountain toward the trembling shaman.

"NOOOOO!" Dizaker howled. He struggled to rise. "I am the Godservant of the Lord of the Depths! I am his—" The shaman's sudden terrorized scream made even Konkar's blood run cold. The scream cut off abruptly with the sounds of bones snapping, many bones at once. The distant echoes of his death cry hung in the silence that followed.

After many long minutes, a goblin warrior raised his weapon into the air. "All hail Konkar, master of demons!" he cried shrilly. "All hail Konkar!"

A ragged shout went up, then a louder one, then one stronger and louder still until wild shrieking and cries of victory rebounded from hillside to hillside across the land.

In the midst of it all, Konkar looked with wonder and pride at his demon—and, after a time, he began to think of some plans.

Konkar the Conqueror

Two months have passed. Konkar's original orders to scout for caves and ruins suitable for goblin colonization have been abandoned. Now he concentrates on exploiting the powers of his new magical item—a *marble mastodon* (a *figurine of wondrous power,* as per the *DMG,* page 168). The figurine's command word is the shouted Common word, "Conquer!" (from which Konkar's own name was derived). Mental communication with the beast has revealed all of its powers to him, but Konkar has passed along little of this knowledge to his underlings. His command over his small group of goblin soldiers is absolute (after all, a demon arrives at the mention of his name), and they will gleefully obey him even at great risk of their lives. The goblins are now forbidden to use the name "Konkar" when addressing or speaking of their subchief; they simply call him "Sub-chief."

Konkar is currently focusing on attacking and destroying some of the trade traffic along a major but poorly patrolled caravan route, striking from the dungeon tomb mentioned earlier (see "Further Adventures"). His original force of goblins and worgs is supplemented once per week by the *marble mastodon* in animal form, with which he strikes against small caravan encampments and travelers. Larger caravans and military patrols are not bothered. A few humans and elves have escaped the surprise attacks and have returned to civilization to warn of this threat, but their stories are somewhat confused given their circumstances.

Konkar's tactics are simple. Worgs and worg-riding goblins scout the highway from cover at night in search of likely victims. When a suitable encampment is spotted, the rest of the lair is warned by one or two scouts while the others continue to monitor their victims' progress. Konkar leaves the dungeon with his troops and has his *marble mastodon* turned into animal form, after it has been placed under a heavy rope net on which his troops will ride (see "The Juggernaut & Crew"). Once enlarged, the mastodon waits while the goblins tie the net securely around it and climb aboard. Then the entire group sets off for the attack. Once the battle is done, the ruined camp is searched, prisoners are slain, weapons are collected, and the goblins return to their dungeon in triumph. Only a few times has an attack been called off; Konkar has been careful to select only easy victories to keep his troops happy and relatively safe so far. He plans for bigger takings in the future, however.

Players' Background

The most obvious way to involve the PCs in this adventure is for them to be contacted and hired by a local baron or merchant prince, or a representative thereof. Several small wagon trains have recently been overrun by a force of goblins and wolves while the former were camped out at night. Among the attackers was a titanic black beast on which some of the goblins rode, a monster so huge that it crushed whole wagons beneath its feet and flung horses and riders aside with its arms.

The DM should create many exaggerated accounts of the monster's attacks, adding in lots of vivid details. Mastodons should be unknown in this area of the campaign, and their size and strength should be beyond most people's imaginings. However, such attacks are not consistent, and some caravans have reported no attacks whatsoever, though all have heard the howling of wolves nearby at night.

The PCs might join a small caravan or set up their own, but with no real valuables in the wagons. They might also set out for the wilderness in secret if rangers and thieves are among their group, hoping to track and ambush the goblins.

The PCs might also meet the goblins without any warning at all if the party happens to be camped by the highway on a moonless evening. Normal chances for surprise should be rolled. The goblins and worgs are trained to move quietly (no surprise penalties or bonuses), and the mastodon (like all elephants) moves much more quietly than one would assume, right up to the point when the goblins charge in for the attack.

The Juggernaut and Crew

The goblins of this heavy assault force have several unique features. First, when on patrol they communicate with each other in the worgs' language: a collection of barks, yips, snarls, and howls that almost no one else speaks. Worg-speech is limited in many respects, but it communicates concepts regarding combat, warnings, and formations reasonably well. Second, these goblins always gain a +2 bonus to avoid being surprised when on patrol, as they use the *marble mastodon* only when planning an assault (so they already expect trouble).

Marble mastodon: Int semi; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 12; hp 96; THAC0 9; #AT 5; Dmg 2-16/2-16/2-12/2-12/2-12; SD immune to *sleep* and to certain other spells as if it had a wisdom of 25; radiates *protection from normal missiles* to all within a 10' radius; SZ L (10' at shoulder); ML 20 (special); XP 7,000; MC (elephant) and DMG/168, with variations.

In its normal form, the *marble mastodon* is a smooth black statuette of vaguely elephantine shape, the size of an outspread human hand. When placed on the ground and a special command word ("Conquer!" in Common—or "Konkar!") is uttered, the figurine rapidly grows within one round to its full mastodon size. It then obeys simple verbal commands given within a 90' radius by its owner. The figurine weighs 6 lbs. and makes all saving throws as either metal or rock crystal, whichever is better (*DMG,* page 39).

In animal form, the *marble mastodon* looks exactly like an exceptionally powerful specimen of mastodon—a monster that virtually no one in this campaign area is likely to have seen. At best, an experienced adventurer would think of it as a huge, black, shaggy, small-eared elephant. However, prolonged observation and the attempted use of certain combat tactics will reveal that this creature is unusual in a number of ways.

The monster can be observed over a few hours time to never eat, sleep, or rest. It always seems to be exceptionally well behaved and obedient (a quality that is not immediately obvious when it is attacking, though it never spooks or jumps at sudden stimuli), and it has no immediate reaction to fire except to avoid stepping in it. The monster moves easily through darkness, as it has infravision out to 90'. When not engaged in melee, the mammoth can be seen to calmly tolerate large numbers of goblins tugging on its fur, climbing onto its back, slapping and petting it, and playing with its trunk (although the goblins have learned not to poke the mastodon with sharp objects, as this earns a slap with the trunk for 1-3 hp damage). Finally, there is a 5% chance per hour of observa-

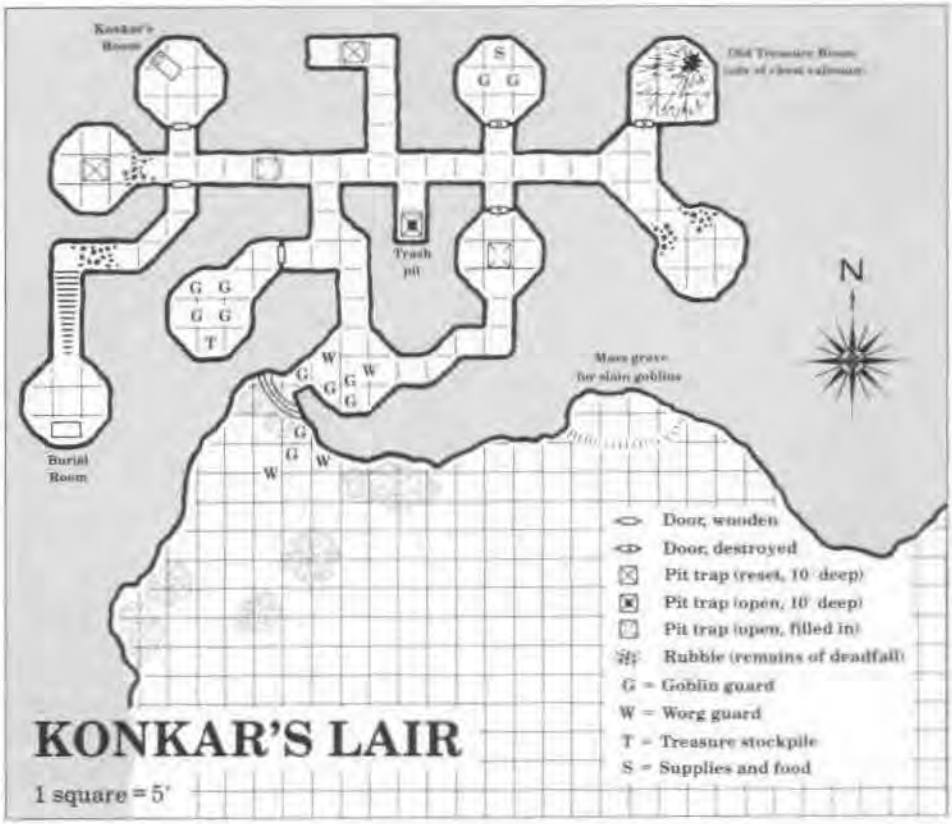
tion that a goblin will be seen to throw a rock at the shaggy beast; the rock bounces off but has absolutely no effect on the monster's attitude. The goblins (except for Konkar) have not figured out that the creature's innate *protection from normal missiles* defense extends 10' out from its hide, thus protecting them from missile fire within that radius.

If destroyed in statuette form, the *marble mastodon* becomes forever useless. If slain in mastodon form, the figurine permanently loses 1 HD (8 hp) from its total but can be reused. After having been slain for the 12th time, the mastodon reverts to statuette form forever. If the user of this device is slain while it is in statuette form, anyone else may pick up the device and use it normally. In mastodon form, the device responds to only the person who activated it. If the user is slain while the device is in mastodon form, the mastodon becomes *confused* (as per the wizard spell *confusion)* for 12 rounds; treat reactions of "act normally for one round" as "attack nearest creature for one round." After this time, it reverts to statuette form and will not work for one week.

Konkar the goblin sub-chief: Int 10; AL LE; AC 5; MV 6 (on foot); HD 1+1; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit ground targets from mastodon (but −1 to hit when mastodon is moving); SZ S (4½' tall); ML 12; XP 35; MC; 10 javelins in container on his back, short sword, dagger in each boot.

Konkar is a goblin who's found the best goblin toy of all: It's big, it's magical, it crushes his enemies, it's completely loyal, and it fits right under his pillow at night. Best of all, it responds to his own name! It's a toy with which he intends to eventually slay the current goblin chief in the home lair, seizing the position for himself. He is ferociously protective of his *marble mastodon* and is very aware of how much power and influence it has given him among his fellow goblins, who believe that Konkar was chosen by the gods for greatness.

Konkar has gone a little crazy with his toy and will revert to childish behavior when he rides on its back. In battle he screams wildly, clutching the mammoth's fur with one gnarled hand and flinging javelin after javelin in his excitement (−1 to hit when mastodon is moving). He will grab a pike or some



throwing axes from other goblins and use those once the javelins run out. Grant him a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. mind-affecting spells (see *PHB*, page 17) under combat conditions.

Goblin mastodon-riders (13): Int low-avg; AL LE; AC 7; MV 6 (on foot); HD 1−1; hp 7 (×2), 6 (×3), 5 (×4), 4 (×3), 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit ground targets from mastodon (but −1 to hit when mastodon is moving); SZ S (4' tall); ML 10; XP 15; MC.

These riders wear studded leather armor but cannot use shields, since they must always have one hand free with which to hang on to the mastodon's fur or netting. Three goblins use light 12'-long pikes to stab at anyone getting close to the mastodon; the pikes are directed to either side and to the rear of the beast. These goblins ride 10' above the ground and so are difficult to attack in hand-to-hand combat.

The other 10 goblins each carry an assortment of 1-2 clubs, 1-2 throwing axes, and 2-5 daggers each, with another 3-18 clubs and 2-12 throwing axes strapped to the netting so that they can be easily freed for combat. The clubs, axes, and daggers are all hurled at opponents as the mastodon charges into a camp or caravan. Note the usual range penalties for hurled weapons and the previously noted penalty for attacking from a moving mastodon. These goblins are not given to subtlety and will shriek up a storm when an attack begins.

Worg mounts (8): Int low; AL N(E); AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+3; hp 26, 25, 22, 21, 18 (×2), 17, 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SZ M (5-7' long); ML 11; XP 120; MC (wolf).

The worgs and their riders serve as scouts and escorts for the mastodon and its riders. Two worgs travel about 100 yards in advance of the rest of the group, which travels around the mastodon in formation. One worg travels ahead and one behind the mastodon by 30'. Two worgs travel, one to either side, by the same distance. The worgs have exceptional senses, giving them a +2 bonus to avoid being surprised. Though they are a bit leery of the mastodon, the worgs have sense enough to leave it alone.

Continued on page 39

COURIER SERVICE

BY TED JAMES THOMAS ZUVICH

Neither rain, nor snow, nor tricky foes . . .

Artwork by Steve Schwartz

Ted works as a sage for a very large Aluminum Dragon in Seattle, Washington. He would like to thank his play-testers; his wife, Eilidh; and John Dawson for help during the writing of this adventure. This is Ted's first publication in DUNGEON® Adventures ("and I'm damn glad to finally make it!").

"Courier Service" is an AD&D® 2nd Edition adventure for 5-8 player characters of levels 3-6, with at least 25 total party levels. The PC group should contain a ranger; a cleric or druid would also be very helpful. The party should be either neutral or good in overall outlook, or the major NPC in this adventure will not have anything to do with them. The adventurers should have horses, ponies, mules, or similar pack animals as well as equipment for adventuring in a winter environment. This adventure makes use of the optional nonweapon proficiency system in the AD&D 2nd Edition rules. The healing, direction-sense, and weather-sense proficiencies are particularly useful.

This adventure assumes that a typical 5th-level PC has few magical items. As a guideline, each magical item in the party should have an experience point value of 750 xp or less. Representative items include scrolls, potions, and +1 weapons. The DM should be able to adapt this feature to a more conventional style with a minimum of effort.

"Courier Service" gives the PCs a chance to earn the gratitude of a powerful NPC, and it provides a way for the DM to ease the PCs into a highly volatile political arena. The DM can easily adapt the feud between the major NPCs of this adventure to fit the political situation of any campaign.

For the Dungeon Master

One of the most often-cursed laws of the nation of Volkrad is the one specifying that each citizen must deliver his annual taxes to the Tax Office in the capital city (also known as Volkrad) by midnight, December 31st. In outlying communities, people usually deal with this awkward (and rigidly enforced) law by giving their tax money to the army, which then transports it to Volkrad. In the frontier city of L'Trel, which is hundreds of miles from Volkrad, the deadline for giving tax money to the army is several months before December 31st.

Under Volkrad law, it is possible to

avoid paying taxes, albeit only temporarily. Until recently, when a person was granted lord status (the equivalent of being knighted) he or she was also exempt from taxation for a period of five years. Three months before this year's deadline for giving tax money to the army, however, the period of exemption was reduced to three years.

Three years ago, X'Celsiah Mia of L'Trel (see sidebar) was given the honor of lord status. Because of a miscommunication with her accountants (possibly caused by an unfriendly outside agent), Lord X'Celsiah was unaware of the change in the exemption period until just before the army tax deadline, and consequently did not have enough money in liquid assets to pay her taxes. Delay followed delay, but finally (November 9th) Lord X'Celsiah has enough money to pay her taxes. Her only problem is finding a way to deliver the money.

X'Celsiah must find someone willing to journey the 370+ miles to Volkrad in the middle of winter. Most of the local mercenary companies are either too expensive or not reliable enough, and would probably refuse to make the dangerous wintertime journey anyway. Nor does X'Celsiah have enough people in her service to send out her own retainers for the three to four months the round-trip journey will take.

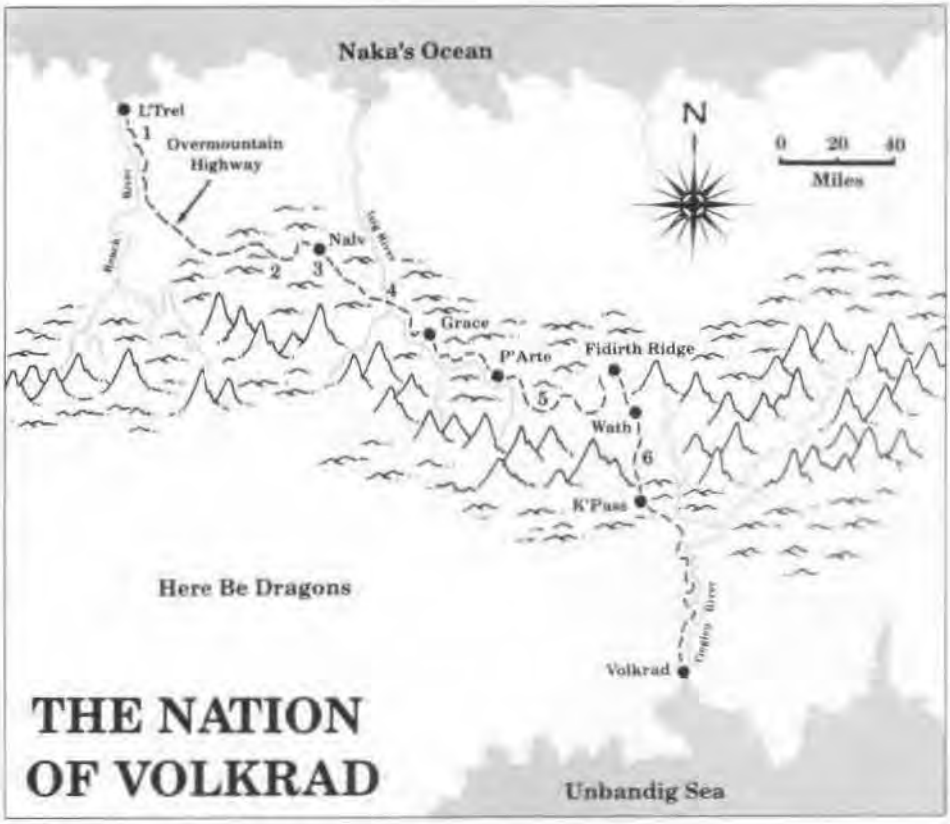
After listening to advice from her retainers and contacts (who suggest that the PCs are reliable, trustworthy, and might be interested in this sort of job), X'Celsiah decides to approach the PCs with her problem.

To further complicate matters, X'Celsiah has several enemies in positions of power, people whom she's alienated in her past. The two most persistent of these are Lord Rhet Corsuhn, a wealthy playboy from L'Trel, and Lord Ira Sarvice, a corrupt civil servant in Volkrad. These two men will do just about anything to humiliate X'Celsiah, and her current tax difficulty provides them with a perfect opportunity.

Midnight Meeting

To start the adventure, read or paraphrase the following to the leader of the PC party (or to the party as a whole, if the text is modified slightly):

> Earlier in the day, a messenger asked you to meet with Lord X'Celsiah Mia at midnight in a park not far from your dwelling. The invitation specified that you come alone. Ordinarily, you never would have accepted such an invitation, but your curiosity got the better of you. X'Celsiah is a figure of legend: the Dragon General, the army officer responsible for the death of the red dragon Cinnabar three years ago. The offer sounded interesting enough that you agreed to the meeting—after taking the precaution of telling your friends, of course.
>
> Now it is just a few minutes until your midnight rendezvous. As you shuffle down the ice-slicked path, you spy a lone figure sitting on an icy park bench. When you approach, the figure stands, displaying the graceful, catlike movements of a longtime warrior. It is a woman, dressed for the frigid weather in long woolen coat and a heavy scarf; a long sword hangs near her right hand. A plait of thick black hair reaches nearly to her waist. After introducing herself as Lord X'Celsiah, she takes a deep breath and launches into her reason for summoning you to this cold and dismal park.
>
> "Well, then, on to business. I've word from the street that you and your friends are reliable sorts and available for hire on rather delicate missions. I've got one for you. How would you like to deliver my taxes this year? I need them delivered to the tax offices in Volkrad by midnight, December 31st. I'll pay your group 1,200 gold pieces for delivering the taxes and returning with my receipt. And I'll give it all to you in advance. That way I can claim the delivery fee as a deduction on my taxes.
>
> "We can sign papers if you want, but I'd prefer just to shake hands on it. I need you answer right now, as I would like you to leave soon after dawn. What do you say?"
>
> It is past midnight, so it is already the early morning of November 10th. The journey from L'Trel to Volkrad takes at least a month, even in the summer when the weather is cooperative. The unpredictable winter weather in the mountains has killed more than its fair share of people



over the years. Because of the weather, the army does not patrol the Overmountain Highway in the winter, which means that the highway becomes a magnet for trouble. You feel hesitant about answering for your companions, but the pay sounds good. You consider your reply.

X'Celsiah may answer a few more questions, such as "Why do you want to hire *us* to deliver your taxes?" (the PCs were available, and what she has heard of their reputation indicates that they are trustworthy), or "Why don't you have your retainers do it?" (see "For the Dungeon Master").

If the PC bargains shrewdly, X'Celsiah may increase her original offer by as much as 200 gp. If the PC insists on more money than this, or delays too much, X'Celsiah simply walks away and the adventure ends here. X'Celsiah is desperate to send someone off with her tax money as soon as possible, so the DM should pressure the PC for a fast answer.

If the PC agrees to the mission, X'Celsiah tells the PC to "get your companions ready and meet me outside my house at dawn (7:15 A.M.), ready for the road. I'll have your payment ready." She gives the PC directions to her house, bids the PC a cheery "good night," and wanders off into the darkness.

Major NPCs

Lord X'Celsiah Mia: AL CG; AC 6; MV 12; F12; hp 139; THAC0 9; #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; S 16, D 14, C 18, I 13, W 15, Ch 16; ML 16; has had *armor* spell (17 points) cast on her person, *long sword +3*, dagger, long bow, short sword, spear; proficiencies: riding (horse), endurance, running, heraldry, etiquette, read/write Common; age 42; height 6'2"; weight 180 lbs.

On any issue related to war, warfare, or the military, consider X'Celsiah to have genius-level intelligence (18). X'Celsiah has waist-length black hair, dark olive skin, and jet-black eyes.

Lord X'Celsiah Mia began her career in the army as a private, at the age of 13, and earned her way into general's rank through her sheer military genius. Although all officers in the Volkrad Army are promoted from the ranks, promotions are usually given to the offspring of lords and former army officers. X'Celsiah was neither of these, so she ended up fighting the system for her entire career. She retired from the army three years ago, just after she and her troops killed the red dragon known as Cinnabar.

X'Celsiah was assigned the task of slaying Cinnabar (a wyrm of great power) by a faction of lords and military leaders who did not like her "uppity ways." Neither she nor the members of her unit were expected to survive the mission. X'Celsiah's troops (a force of 100 elite army fighters, all 2nd or 3rd level) spent 14 months pursuing Cinnabar through the hills and mountains of Volkrad before they brought the monster to bay. Less than a quarter of her troops survived the final confrontation.

Lord Rhet Corsuhn: Statistics for Rhet are purposely omitted, because the PCs should not meet him during the course of this adventure. The DM should feel free to develop a profile that suits his campaign.

Rhet is a master shipbuilder with a large business based in L'Trel. In addition to being a thoroughly hedonistic playboy and lout, Rhet has many contacts and friends among the seedy, wild elements of L'Trellian society.

Rhet attempted to win X'Celsiah's hand in marriage for several years, but she continually refused his advances. A few months ago, X'Celsiah discouraged Rhet from pursuing her further by humiliating him in a practice combat. Rhet has been using his many contacts in L'Trel's underworld to tail X'Celsiah for the last two weeks (prior to November 9th), to find a way to take exquisite revenge on her.

Lord Ira Sarvice: AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; M9; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 8, D 11, C 10, I 17, W 15, Ch 14; ML 8; XP 3,000; has had *armor* spell (17 points) cast upon him, *dagger +1*; spells: *hypnotism, read magic, shocking grasp, unseen servant, forget, glitterdust, misdirection, delude, suggestion* (×2), *improved invisibility, shout, false vision.*

Lord Ira Sarvice has been Volkrad's deputy tax minister (an appointed position) for the last 20 years. Ira's position has allowed him to slowly introduce elements of corruption into Volkrad's government. He is also a leader in the mafia-style thieves' guild of Volkrad, although his membership in the guild is one of Volkrad's most carefully kept secrets.

Ira does not like X'Celsiah at all. A few years ago, X'Celsiah and Ira clashed over the funding of some of X'Celsiah's proposed army projects. One of the projects would have interfered with Ira's embezzlement schemes, so he used his influence over Volkrad's budget to eliminate the mission. X'Celsiah managed to get the funding restored by bringing the matter to the attention of the tax minister himself, Lord Hiram Parma, who is an old friend from her army days. Thus, X'Celsiah earned Sarvice's undying enmity.

On top of this, although Volkrad society as a whole is not male chauvinistic, Ira is. He considers X'Celsiah to be a boorish, crass, cheeky, ill-educated upstart who is not aware of her proper (subservient) place in society.

Lord Hiram Parma: AL LG; AC 5; MV 12; M7; hp 19; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 10, D 10, C 8, I 14, W 17, Ch 15; ML 14; *armor* spell (15 points), *ring of protection +1*; spells: *comprehend languages, light, message, unseen servant, ESP, knock, levitate, dispel magic, tongues, detect scrying.*

Lord Hiram is the tax minister for Volkrad, a position that he has held for the past 10 years. He is nearly 90 years old but is very hale and hearty for his age. It is not generally known that he is a mage, which is the way he prefers it. Hiram started out his decades-long career in the government of Volkrad as a clerk in the army and slowly worked his way up. Hiram knows X'Celsiah from her time in the army, and he thinks highly of her. Hiram is a friendly, open-minded man who does what he can to interject a little leniency and justice into the harsh (and sometimes corrupt) tax system of Volkrad.

For the Player Characters

Wait until after running the "Midnight Meeting" scenario to give the players the following information. The DM may also wish to provide some background on Volkrad's tax laws and any information about X'Celsiah that he feels would be common knowledge.

Either read this section aloud or give the players a copy:

> The nation of Volkrad is ruled by a Council of Lords selected from the general populace on the basis of exemplary service to Volkrad. Gaining lord status is roughly equivalent to being knighted. Every 10 years, the lords elect 10 of their number to function as the ruling council of Volkrad. The council governs as it sees fit, appoints various people to fill government positions, and settles matters of national law.
>
> Volkrad is a sparsely populated nation with widely scattered villages and cities. A vast, nearly impenetrable mountain range known as the Dividing Mountains splits the country into two sections, tenuously connected by the Overmountain Highway. The relatively young city of L'Trel (pronounced lah-TREL) holds sway over the northern section of the country. The southern half is dominated by the ancient capital city of Volkrad. In the 370+ mile journey between L'Trel and Volkrad, the Overmountain Highway passes directly through the villages of Nalv, Grace, P'Arte, Fidirth Ridge, Wath, and K'Pass.
>
> As an aid for travelers, Volkrad's army maintains a series of shelters along the length of the Overmountain Highway. In the valley areas of L'Trel and Volkrad, the shelters are usually spaced about four miles apart. This spacing corresponds to a quarter-day of travel during the winter. Along the hilly, low-mountain areas between the foothills and Wath, the shelters are also spaced every four miles, which represents a half-day of travel in the winter. In the high-mountain areas of the road, between Wath and K'Pass, the shelters are spaced every two miles, which is also a half-day of winter travel.
>
> The roadside shelters are of very standardized construction. Each shelter includes a common room with a large fireplace, and a barn for horses (or other animals). Some of the shelters have wells or cisterns for drinking water.
>
> The army does not patrol the section of the highway between Wath and K'Pass during the winter, but it does see to it that each shelter is repaired and stocked with firewood before patrols cease. These stocks of wood could save the life of someone who absolutely must travel the Overmountain Highway during the winter season.
>
> The code of conduct for the shelters is chiseled in Common into the stone slab above the fireplace of each of the shelters. The code reads as follows:
>
> 1. Make room. Deny no man shelter from a storm.
> 2. Leave this shelter in better shape than you found it.
> 3. Cut and stack new wood.
> 4. Shelter vandalism is a hanging offense.

A Change of Heart

An hour after the PC leader returns home after accepting X'Celsiah's offer of employment, a loud knock comes at the door. A deep, obnoxious male voice asks by name for the PC whom X'Celsiah talked to. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The loud, disruptive knocking continues, now accompanied by an unidentified male voice demanding to speak to [leader PC]. One of you opens the door, revealing a tall, gangling man in Lord X'Celsiah's livery. The man states that he has a message from X'Celsiah. A look of concentration crosses the man's face as he rushes through the words: "X'Celsiah here. Sorry for the inconvenience, but it looks as if I won't be needing you after all. Here's 25 gp to make up for your trouble. I'll contact you again if anything else comes up." His message finished, the man hands you a heavy bag, turns on his heel, and swiftly departs.

The local thieves' guild naturally had a spy placed in the park to overhear the conversation that took place between X'Celsiah and the PC. Once Lord Rhet Corsuhn heard from his contacts about X'Celsiah's situation, he hired this man (through the thieves' guild) in an attempt to throw the PCs off. If this subterfuge delays the PCs' departure (and X'Celsiah's plans) by even a day, Rhet will consider his 25 gp well spent.

Make a proficiency check for any PC in the group with either the heraldry or the local history proficiency. If the check is successful, inform the PC that something about the man's uniform is "not quite right." Alternatively, if the player who met with X'Celsiah in the park asks if there is anything odd about the messenger, make an intelligence check. If the check is successful, tell the player that something about the messenger seems wrong.

If the PCs attempt to give chase to the false messenger, he quickly disappears into the night. He is a very slippery fish to catch and does not know who hired him, only that his superiors told him to deliver the above message.

Thieves' guild messenger: AL CN; AC 8; MV 12; T4; hp 11; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; D 16; I 12; Ch 10; ML 16; short sword; move silently 95%, hide in shadows 85%; proficiencies: disguise, jumping, read lips.

ROADSIDE SHELTER

1 square = 5'

At X'Celsiah's House

If the PCs get suckered into Rhet's trap and do not go to X'Celsiah's house in the morning, the adventure ends here. X'Celsiah quickly hires another mercenary group to take her tax money to Volkrad.

If the PCs do show up at X'Celsiah's house in the morning, they find her waiting for them on the front step along with several of her retainers.

X'Celsiah first introduces herself to all the PCs, then gets down to business. She gives the PCs two items: a heavy metal scroll tube with screw-cap ends; and a small, unlocked wooden chest. The scroll tube is engraved with X'Celsiah's coat of arms and runes that read, "To Lord Hiram Parma, Volkrad Tax Office, Payment in Full for Lord X'Celsiah Mia's Taxes."

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> After placing the heavy metal scroll tube and the small wooden chest in your care, Lord X'Celsiah issues the following orders. "You are to personally deliver the message tube containing my taxes to Lord Hiram Parma by midnight, December 31st. Late fees on my taxes will amount to 20 gold pieces per day. Use the 200 gold pieces contained in the wooden chest to pay any necessary late fees, and you are welcome to keep the remainder. The absolute limit for the delivery is January 10th. If you make the delivery after this date, my scribes tell me that I will owe more than 26,000 gold pieces in back taxes and fines. Please do not be that late. When you have completed the delivery, return here with the receipt. There is no reason for you to rush back, but do not dawdle in Volkrad. Even though I have paid you in advance, I expect the complete mission to be carried out.
>
> "You'll find Lord Hiram in the minister's office at the Volkrad Tax Office. He's an old, skinny, white-haired man with a salt-and-pepper beard, bad taste in clothing, and a smile like sunshine. That should be enough of a description to allow you to recognize him. Just to be safe, I had a mage contact Lord Hiram last night and tell him that you were coming, so he should be on the lookout for you.
>
> "The message tube is magically locked so that it will open only for myself and Lord Hiram. It contains enough gems, coins, and other small valuables to pay the taxes owed. I tried to make it as light as possible.
>
> Two servants come out the front door and set another wooden chest on the steps while X'Celsiah continues to speak. "As you can see, I also have your payment, in advance, as I promised. This chest contains 1,200 gp in various valuables. If you prefer, I could give you mounts and supplies as part of your payment. My animals are all battle trained and very reliable. To tell the truth, I prefer that you take at least part of your payment in this fashion."

The message tube that contains X'Celsiah's taxes has a special 9th-level *wizard lock* spell placed upon it (it will open automatically for Lord Parma). As X'Celsiah told the PCs, the wooden chest containing their payment contains 1,200 gp in assorted valuables. The exact contents of the tube and the chest are left up to the DM. Each of these two items has an encumbrance value of 15 lbs.

There is nothing to prevent the PCs from taking their payment, hiring a high-level mage to open the message tube, and waltzing off with all the money. However, the PCs would first have to find a mage willing to risk the enmity of X'Celsiah (remember, the tube is engraved). When X'Celsiah found out that the PCs had betrayed and robbed her, she would use her influence to make sure that the PCs would never get another contract in the nation of Volkrad. In all likelihood, X'Celsiah could convince the army to declare the PCs as outlaws (and the mage who opened the message tube) and place a large price on their heads.

If the PCs accept X'Celsiah's offer of alternative payment, she can give them light war horses (no more than five), mules, ponies, saddles, and trail food as partial or full payment. All of X'Celsiah's animals have a +2 morale bonus because of their training, and have close to maximum hit points. The animals are worth twice the *Player's Handbook* value, per the "high-spirited horse" rule on page 36 of the *Dungeon Master's*

Overland Travel Rates

Section	Rate	Miles	Days
L'Trel to Foothills	16	60	4
Foothills to Nalv	8	48	6
Nalv to Grace	8	48	6
Grace to P'Arte	8	30	4
P'Arte to Fidirth Ridge	8	66	8
Fidirth Ridge to Wath	8	18	2
Wath to K'Pass	4	30	7½
K'Pass to Volkrad	16	70	4½
		370	42

This chart lists the movement rates for the various stretches of the Overmountain Highway. The "Rate" column is the party's movement rate in miles per day. The "Miles" column shows the distance between the various villages and landmarks along the road. The "Days" column shows how many days it will take the PCs to cover the distance between the points at the listed movement rate. This chart contains information any ranger would know; you may show the chart to the player of any ranger PC.

The times and rates given here assume that the party has a base movement rate of 12, and that everyone in the party wears snowshoes while walking. Wearing snowshoes reduces a person's base movement by one-third, to a movement rate of 8. If someone in the party walks without wearing snowshoes, cut the movement rate shown on the chart in half. Because of the adverse traveling conditions, the maximum movement rate along the highway is 8, even if the PCs have mounts with a base movement rating greater than 12.

For more information on overland travel, the DM should review pages 123-125 of the *DMG*. In addition, the PCs will probably elect to try force-marching at least once during this adventure, so please review the section on force-marching on page 120 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Guide. Other items of equipment given to the PCs are of normal value. Once negotiations about the form of payment are settled, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Once all of your supplies are settled and you are ready to set off on your long journey, X'Celsiah comes to you with a few final words. With a grin that does much to hide the worry that you know she must be feeling, the warrior-woman says, "I wish you all good luck and a swift journey. I'm putting a lot of faith in what I've heard about you. Do me this favor, and I'll see to it that you are repaid in kind."

The Overmountain Highway

Please review and become familiar with the following information before attempting to run the section of the adventure that deals with the PCs' journey from L'Trel to Volkrad.

Several things will remain constant during the PCs' journey along the Overmountain Highway. Traveling conditions are fairly predictable: 2'-3' of snow on the road at all times, sub-zero temperatures, high winds, and hilly terrain. It will snow for several hours each day. This type of snow has no affect on travel rates (see "Overland Travel Rates"), unlike the snowstorms discussed in the Weather and Random Encounters table.

Another constant is the presence of people. Although traffic is sparse this time of year, the PCs will encounter people on the highway every day or so: merchants, soldiers, trappers, and other wanderers. The DM should take care to mention both the weather and the travelers along the road.

As an aid to the flow of game play, the DM should make a calendar of the period from November 10th to a few days past December 31st. One such calendar is shown in the sidebar *as an example only;* the DM should make up his own calendar. Roll all random encounters before play begins and mark them on the calendar. The dates of the various set encounters should be marked on the calendar as well. By using the movement rates shown in the Overland Travel Rates table, and by keeping track of any delays caused by the weather or monster encounters, the DM can determine whether the PCs arrive in Volkrad on time.

Although the weather conditions along the highway are harsh, the PCs will not be affected by the weather under normal circumstances, assuming that they dress in warm, insulating furs and water-resistant clothing. However, the light snow, heavy snow, high winds, and blizzard results on the Weather and Random Encounters table do present dangers to the PCs. If the PCs travel in these types of weather, they can be affected by hypothermia. During each check interval (listed in the table), each PC must make a constitution check or take 1-6 hp damage. If the check is successful, the PC takes half damage but always at least 1 hp. Horses, ponies, and other beasts are also susceptible to hypothermia and must save vs. death magic when making hypothermia checks, since they lack constitution scores.

If a character or animal takes 50% or more of his base hit points in hypothermia damage, he must make a system shock roll or immediately fall unconscious and begin losing 1 hp per round thereafter. Even if the system shock roll is successful, the character develops frostbite. One part of the body "dies" and eventually rots and falls off when thawed. Frostbite affects the extremities first; ears, fingers, toes, lips, and cheeks are especially vulnerable. The DM should decide what part of the character's anatomy is affected by frostbite based on his judgment of what area is most exposed to the weather.

Curative spells function normally when used to repair damage caused by hypothermia. Spells such as *resist cold* render the character immune to hypothermia for the duration of the spell. A PC with the healing proficiency can save frostbitten extremities by making a successful proficiency check.

Because of the strain imposed by the adverse traveling conditions, the PCs cannot recover hit points during this adventure except under very special conditions. The PCs can recover 1 hp per day (maximum) if they stay in a shelter for a full day (24 hours). They must light a fire, get complete bed rest, and be tended by someone with the healing proficiency. Because of this ruling, spell use will be the primary means used to recover hit points. This restriction also makes the monster encounters many times deadlier than they would normally be.

Example Calendar

Date	Event
Nov 9	X'Celsiah contacts PC leader (night)
Nov 10	PCs leave L'Trel; The Bandits (encounter 1)
Nov 11	High winds; PCs stop and lose one day
Nov 14	PCs reach foothills (adjusted for lost day)
Nov 15	The Wolf (encounter 2)
Nov 16	Clear day
Nov 20	PCs reach Nalv (encounter 3)
Nov 23	PCs reach Isig Chasm Bridge (morning; encounter 4)
Nov 24	Clear day
Nov 26	PCs reach Grace (afternoon)
Nov 27	Heavy snow; lose one day
Dec 1	PCs reach P'Arte (afternoon)
Dec 4	Blizzard hits at end of day (encounter 5)
Dec 7	Blizzard clears and PCs can move on
Dec 8	Random monster encounter
Dec 11	PCs reach Fidirth Ridge (afternoon)
Dec 12	Heavy snow; lose one day
Dec 14	PCs reach Wath (evening)
Dec 15	Random monster encounter
Dec 16	Random monster encounter
Dec 17	The Roaring Dragon (encounter 6)
Dec 21	Heavy snow; lose one day
Dec 22	PCs reach K'Pass (morning)
Dec 24	Heavy snow; lose one day
Dec 25	Random monster encounter
Dec 28	PCs reach Volkrad (afternoon)

Weather and Random Encounters

To determine random encounters, roll 1d6 once per day. A roll of 1 or 2 indicates an encounter occurs. When an encounter is indicated, roll percentile dice and consult the table below.

Weather results apply to the whole day. Do not roll on this table on days with a fixed encounter, as the encounter description covers the weather conditions. Certain creature encounters will occur only in specific areas as noted in the encounter description. Each creature encounter is intended to be used only once during the adventure, although the orc/ogre encounter can be reworked and used again. Reroll if a duplicate monster encounter is indicated.

If the DM wants more realism and can handle a few more details, he can roll 1d10 to determine the hour of the traveling day during which bad weather starts. This may allow a party to get to the next shelter before a snowstorm hits, thus gaining time over the journey. For example, the DM has determined that a heavy snowstorm will hit the PCs on the 7th hour of the traveling day. A PC who makes a successful weather-sense proficiency check can advise the others that they should be able to make it to the next shelter before the storm hits.

The following abbreviations have special meaning when used in this table:
MV = effect on movement rating.
V = effect on all types of vision.
Lost = base chance of becoming lost. If there is a ranger in the party, the chance of getting lost is reduced by 2% per level of the ranger (cumulative for multiple rangers).

01-14 **Light snowstorm:** MV ×½, V ×½, Lost 20%. Roll hypothermia saves every five hours.

15-22 **Heavy snowstorm:** MV ×½, V ×¼, Lost 30%. There is a 50% chance that heavy snow becomes light snow on the next day. Roll hypothermia saves every five hours.

23-32 **High winds:** MV ×¾, V ×¾. The winds drive loose snow around in fierce gusts; sometimes the wind chill factor increases to deadly levels. Roll 3d10+20 for the wind speed in miles per hour. Roll hypothermia checks hourly, with a −1 penalty per 5 MPH above 25 MPH of wind speed.

33-35 **Blizzard:** MV ×¼, V ×¼, Lost 50%. Duration: 1-3 days; 30% likely to become light snow the day after the blizzard stops. Wind speed is 2d10+30 MPH. Roll hypothermia checks every turn and apply the penalties for high winds as above. If this result is indicated more than once during the adventure, treat the encounter as heavy snow instead.

36-45 **Clear day:** The day is mild with clear, bright blue skies and lots of sun—perhaps too much sun. Any PC who does not cover his eyes must make a wisdom check or become snow-blind for 1-3 days. Snow-blindness duplicates the effect of having a *light* spell cast in one's eyes: −4 to all attack rolls and +4 to be hit by any opponents.

46-50 **White pudding:** Int nil; AL N; AC 8; MV 9; HD 9; hp 48; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 7-28; SA 50% likely to be mistaken for ice or snow; SD immune to acid, cold, poison; lightning and blows from weapons divide it into smaller puddings; dissolves animal or vegetable matter in one round; SZ M; ML special; XP 4,000; MC (puddings, deadly).

This encounter occurs only if the party is in the high-pass area between Wath and K'Pass. The pudding is hunting by the trail in the hope of finding a meal. Because it resembles a snowbank, it has a +4 to its surprise roll.

51-63 **Orcish scouting force:** Orcs and their associates often prowl along the highway during the winter, looking for the opportunity to waylay any group they outnumber. This group (of 15 orcs and one ogre) has hidden itself in a small copse of trees to the side of the road. The force gains a +1 on its surprise roll. If the surprise succeeds, the orcs fire a volley of two arrows each, aiming for unarmored PCs first. The orcs then ditch their short bows and run forward through the snow to engage in melee combat.

Even if surprise is indicated, however, there is a 30% chance that the ogre charges forth too soon, spoiling the orcs' aim. The ogre's charge does not negate the surprise, but it does prevent the orcs from shooting more than one arrow each at the PCs, because the ogre crosses their field of fire. This is an extremely stupid (and strong) ogre.

The Volkrad Army offers a 2-gp bounty on pairs of orc ears, which the PCs can collect at any army garrison. This bounty should be common knowledge to the PCs. Every orc carries 1-6 sp and 1-10 cp in orcish coinage. The orcs also have a snow-sled (hidden in the trees) that they use to carry various disgusting food items and 150 gp worth of furs and hides: deer, beaver, wolf, otter, muskrat, elk, etc. The ogre wears a badly mangled gold bracelet worth 10 gp for its gold content, not its workmanship.

Orcs (15): Int avg; AL LE; AC 6; MV 9; HD 1; hp 5 (×2), 6 (×3), 7 (×4), 8 (×5), 9; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SZ M; ML 13; XP 15; MC; ring mail, shield, axe, short bow.

Ogre: Int low; AL CE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4+1; hp 30; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12 (as 18/00 strength with normal weapons); SZ L; ML 13; XP 175; MC. This ogre was raised by the orcs as a sort of heavy infantry. He was taught to use a giant, cruelly spiked tree branch as a club, and he is now quite expert in its use. The ogre's blows have a 30% chance of stunning man-sized or smaller creatures for 1-4 rounds. If the ogre gets a "stun" result, his opponent is batted into the air and lands 1'-20' away. While stunned, the unfortunate victim has a −2 penalty on all attack rolls.

64-68 **Cave bear:** Int semi; AL N; AC 6; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 40; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-12; SA hug; SZ H; ML 8; XP 650; MC.

This encounter occurs only between Nalv and K'Pass. The cave bear may not attack the PCs if they do not bother him. If the PCs disturb him, the bear attacks ferociously, displaying his less-than-pleasant temper. If the bear rolls an 18 or greater to attack with his paw, he hugs for an additional 2-16 hp damage.

69-78 **Eagle Rider:** This encounter occurs only between Nalv and K'Pass. Sol the Elf is an eagle rider and scout for a tribe of elves that lives in the mountains. If the party has trouble with the orc/ogre encounter, the DM may wish to merge the two encounters so that Sol and his giant eagle, Killsoft, can help out the PCs. Otherwise, Sol is merely curious about travelers along the highway. He may

direct Killsoft to "buzz" the PCs, skimming low enough to let the PCs feel the breeze of their passage. If the PCs make no hostile moves, Sol eventually lands and talks with the party. Both Sol and Killsoft are curious about anyone daring enough to travel the highway during the winter.

Sol the elf: AL CG; AC 3 (5); MV 12; F5/M5; hp 25; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; SA +1 to hit with bow or long sword; SD infravision 60'; MR 90% resistant to *sleep* and *charm* spells; S 14, D 16, C10, I 17, W 12, Ch 14; ML 15; elven chain mail, long sword, long bow; spells: *dancing lights, feather fall, phantasmal force, wall of fog, glitterdust, locate object, invisibility 10' radius.*

Killsoft (giant eagle): Int avg; AL N(G); AC 7; MV 3, fly 48 (D); HD 4; hp 27; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-12; SA dive; SD cannot be surprised in daylight; SZ L; ML 13; MC. Killsoft has a limited form of telepathy that allows him to communicate with most intelligent creatures.

79-83 **Troll Raider:** This encounter occurs only between Nalv and K'Pass. On a night with heavy snow, a troll and his winter wolf companion carefully sneak up on the PCs' shelter, gaining a +2 on surprise rolls. The troll and wolf burst into the barn area of the shelter, and the troll uses his surprise segment to kill one of the riding or pack animals, using an old long sword to chop the animal in half. The raiders then flee into the night, carrying half of the carcass with them.

Both the troll and the wolf can move at full speed under these conditions, because they are well adapted to the winter environment. If the PCs attempt to follow, their movement rating should be penalized for both darkness (×½) and heavy snow (×⅓).

Troll: Int low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 41; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/5-12; SA can attack multiple opponents; SD regeneration; SZ L; S 18 (92); ML 14; XP 1,400; MC.

Winter wolf: Int avg; AL NE; AC 5; MV 18; HD 6; hp 37; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA frost; SD immune to cold-based attacks; SZ L; ML 13; XP 975; MC.

84-92 **Military Patrol:** This encounter occurs only in the section of the Overmountain Highway between L'Trel and the foothills and between K'Pass and Volkrad. Army patrols usually number 10 or more and are led by a sergeant (F2 or F3). Every citizen of Volkrad serves at least three years in the army, at a young age. These soldiers are all young (between 14 and 20 years old), fresh, and eager.

Soldiers (10): AL any N or G; AC 4; MV 9; F3 (×1), F1 (×5), F0 (×4); hp 23, 8 (×5), 6 (×4); THAC0 18, 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; chain mail, shield, short sword, long bow, dagger, spear.

93-98 **Blink dogs** (4-16): Int avg; AL LG; AC 5; MV 12; HD 4; hp varied; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA attack from rear 75% of the time; SD teleportation; SZ M; ML 12; MC.

On an exceptionally cold night, a pack of blink dogs (a mountain variety similar to the plains-dwelling blink dogs described in the *Monstrous Compendium*) blinks into the roadside shelter to spend the night with the PCs. The dogs are intelligent and can respond to human communication nonverbally. If threatened, the pack blinks out. This encounter can be highly entertaining if the DM takes the time to role-play the part of the dogs.

99-00 **Ice serpent:** Int animal; AL N(E); AC 4; MV 18; HD 9; hp 45; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2-12/3-12; SA +3 to surprise, constriction; SZ G (45' long, 1' diameter); ML 16; XP 2,000; MC (snake, giant constrictor, variant).

This encounter occurs only between Wath and K'Pass. The ice serpent attacks twice in a round, once with a bite and once with a lash of its tail. The tail-lash can send man-size or smaller creatures flying through the air for great distances. Instead of using its normal bite/lash attacks, the ice serpent can opt to constrict its prey for 3-12 hp damage per round. If using its constriction attack, the serpent does not need to roll to hit each round.

Ice serpents are covered in white fur, to match the snowy realms where they live. The coloration of the serpent gives it a greater than normal chance to surprise opponents. The fur of ice serpents is much prized for making warm, waterproof garments that protect the wearer from extremely cold weather. The fur can be sold for up to 40 gp per square yard.

Set Encounters

1. The Bandits. This encounter occurs when the PCs are about 10 miles away from L'Trel, on the same day that they leave. If the PCs left when X'Celsiah asked them to, it should be the afternoon of November 10th.

A group of bandits hired by Rhet Corsuhn (through a thieves' guild intermediary) is hiding around a corner in the road, ready to ambush the PCs. The bandits are actually a mercenary company from L'Trel, but their leader sometimes accepts contracts on the shady side of the law. Their primary mission is to get the scroll tube that holds X'Celsiah's taxes, but the bandits are not averse to taking anything else the PCs have of value as well.

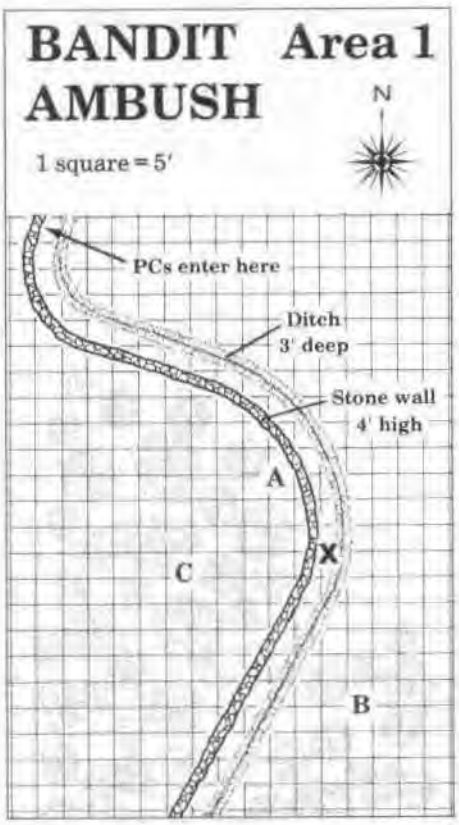
Because of their careful preparations, the bandits gain a +4 bonus to surprise the PCs. If the bandits do not surprise the PCs, the consequences are left to the DM to decide. If the PCs are surprised, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> What a dismal way to start a journey. Wet sleet falls constantly, soaking everything and making you cold and miserable. You slog along the road, battling to maintain your balance on the thin coating of icy slush, but the distant mountains to the south never seem to get any nearer. At least here in the lowlands you are making relatively good time. Suddenly, as you come around a corner in the road, a loud, hoarse shout comes from high up in a tree. You have just enough time to curse yourself for your inattention to the dangers of the road when leather-clad men, at least a dozen in number, rise out of the trees in front of you and send a flight of black-shafted arrows winging your way.

A lookout is stationed high up in a fir-tree above the position marked A on the Bandit Ambush map. Ten bandits are crouched down on the ground near A as well, behind the 4'-high stone wall.

The second-in-command for the bandits and 11 other bandits are hiding in the trees and bushes near position B.

A mage, the bandit leader, and three bandits who serve as bodyguards for the mage are hiding at position C, which is 15' farther back in the trees than position A.



The lookout watches the PCs come up the road and shouts when they reach the position marked X. Once the lookout shouts his warning, the bandits at A and B stand up and begin firing arrows in an attempt to catch the PCs in a crossfire.

The bandits aim for the PCs' mounts first, to prevent the PCs from riding away. After that, the bandits aim for any obvious mages or clerics in order to knock out the PCs' spell power. The bandits fire two arrows each during the first round. After this, bandit tactics are left to the DM.

The bandit mage has many useful spells (consider the effects of a *slow* spell cast into the middle of the PC group, or the effects of an *enlarge* spell cast upon the bandit leader) for an ambush situation.

The bandits will use the cover provided by the 4' wall and the trees and bushes for as long as possible before engaging the PCs in melee combat. Remember that the bandits' mission is to rob the PCs, not necessarily to kill or maim them.

If the bandits defeat the PCs (or get them to surrender), they rob the adventurers, tie them up, and leave them in the bushes. The bandits then return to L'Trel and promptly disappear in its seedy underworld.

If the PCs defeat the bandits and manage to capture any of them for questioning, none of the rank-and-file bandits know who hired them for the robbery attempt. The bandit leader is the only one who knows anything, and he must fail a morale check by three or more points or he will refuse to answer. The commission came to the bandit leader through a friend in the L'Trellian thieves' guild; even the leader does not know who really commissioned the robbery. If the PCs can convince the leader to talk, they may be able trace this attack back to Rhet by finding the thieves' guild contact.

If the PCs capture any bandits, they soon encounter an army road-patrol (see Random Encounters Table for typical statistics and composition) that will gladly take charge of any prisoners. The leader of the patrol recognizes several of the bandits as wanted felons and informs the PCs that there is a 300-gp reward for the bandits. The PCs must claim the reward within 30 days, in L'Trel, or it will be forfeited to the army. Tell the PCs that the army takes at least three days to verify identities of criminals before it pays out any reward money; let them decide if they want to delay long enough to return to L'Trel and press their claim.

Bandits (25): AL N; AC 6; MV 12; F1 or F0; hp 8 (×11), 6 (×14); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 15; XP 35; studded leather armor, shield, short bow, short sword, dagger, 1-6 gp in cheap jewelry, rings, etc.

Second-in-command: AL N; AC 6; MV 12; F2; hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16; ML 15; XP 65; studded leather armor, shield, short bow, short sword, dagger, 62 gp in gold jewelry.

Bandit leader: AL N; AC 4; MV 12; F5; hp 34; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 18/07, Ch 15; ML 15; XP 175; chain mail, shield, long sword (worth 45 gp), short sword, dagger, 6 gp, 25 gp in rings.

Bandit mage: AL NE; AC 4; MV 12; M5; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 10, D 16, C 10, I 15, W 12, Ch 14; ML 15; XP 975; *armor* spell (13 points), dagger, potion of *gaseous form*, 20-gp glass prism (for *read magic* spell), 50-gp pearl, 6 gp; spells: *charm person* (×2), *enlarge, light, read magic, forget, levitate, slow*. For this short trip, the mage has left her spell book in her quarters in L'Trel.

2. The Wolf. This encounter occurs in the evening, just as the PCs are approaching one of the roadside shelters about three days travel (24 miles) before reaching the mountain village of Nalv. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Today's trek was long and difficult. This shelter must be abnormally far from its fellows, because you pushed hard during the afternoon and you are just now reaching the shelter. Although it is not fully dark yet, the temperature is already well below zero. As you stumble along in the numbing cold, the outline of the shelter ahead serves as an incentive to hurry.
>
> There must be someone in the shelter already; a thin wisp of smoke is coming out of the chimney. You are about 150' from the humble stone building when you hear strange sounds are coming from the shelter. A low-pitched, evil-sounding growling noise fills the freezing night air, coupled with occasional cursing and swearing in the Common tongue.

Inside the shelter, a ranger named Harkone is doing his best to defend himself from the malicious attentions of a werewolf. The werewolf is toying with Harkone, prolonging the fight. Harkone is having a hard time keeping the huge black werewolf at bay, because his only weapon usable against the werewolf is a silver crossbow quarrel, and he has only one. He is currently using the quarrel in his hand, jabbing it at the wolf (the quarrel does 1-2 hp damage when used as a hand weapon).

If the PCs are cautious, they can sneak up to the shelter without alerting the werewolf; it is intent on its fight with Harkone. Show the players the floor plan of the Roadside Shelter.

If the PCs try to save Harkone, the werewolf's first reaction is to attempt escape. The door to the barn is open, and it tries to run out this way. The wolf fights only if the PCs block its escape.

If the PCs manage to save Harkone, he expresses his gratitude and talks freely with the PCs. Harkone explains that an hour or so after he reached the

shelter, the door opened and a shaggy, dark-haired man came in. Harkone did not like the look of him, but the code of the shelters states "Make room," so he did. Harkone suspected that the man was a bandit, so he faked going to sleep. As soon as the wolf-man was convinced that Harkone was asleep and that no one else would be coming into the shelter, he changed to his wolf-form and attacked.

If the PCs explain their mission to Harkone, he offers to guide them along the Overmountain Highway as far as Wath. Harkone is very familiar with the highway. If the PCs accept his offer and allow him to travel with them, Harkone manages to shave two days off the PCs' journey time.

The werewolf had some belongings with him. Searching through these items reveals the following: a long sword (worth 10 gp), a long bow (100 gp), some spices (25 gp), a bearskin coat (75 gp), 12 gp, 22 sp, 18 cp, and a jade belt buckle (27 gp).

Harkone: AL CG; AC 7; MV 12; R2; hp 20 (15 after werewolf attack); THAC0 19; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 10, C 15, I 10, W 14, Ch 12; ML 13; studded leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, dagger, silver quarrel; proficiencies: tracking, set snare, direction sense, read/write Common, riding (horse).

Werewolf: Int avg; AL CE; AC 5; MV 15; HD 4+3; hp 31 (28 after fight with Harkone); THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 in wolf form; SA surprise; SD silver or +1 or better weapon to hit; ML 13; XP 420; MC.

3. The Village of Nalv. Nalv is a highland town with a civilian population of 1,500 and an army garrison that houses more than 500 soldiers during the winter. Nalv serves as a rendezvous point and winter shelter for trappers, mountain men, and the occasional ranger. The nature of its population makes Nalv the center of the fur trade for the nation of Volkrad. Prices in Nalv are generally high (at least 10% over *Player's Handbook* prices), and only common items are available. The PCs can negotiate with the quartermaster of the army garrison for armor, armor repairs, weapons, and pack animals. Such items and services cost at least twice the normal price.

The other highland towns along the Overmountain Highway (Grace, P'Arte, Fidirth Ridge, Wath, K'Pass) fit the same pattern as Nalv, varying slightly in population and price of supplies. The DM should use the description of Nalv as a template for the other towns along the way.

If the PCs are interested in finding a place to stay in Nalv, its dour-but-friendly inhabitants quickly inform them that the Ice Serpent is the only inn in town. The Serpent's dim, smoky, noise-filled interior holds off-duty soldiers, drunken trappers, silent mountain men, whispering villagers, and the occasional tribal elf or clan-dwarf. Sleeping rooms at the Ice Serpent cost 7 sp per person per night; a space in the common room is 4 sp per night. These prices includes dinner.

If the PCs wish to stay at the Ice Serpent, they must deal with its bartender/owner, a balding, extroverted man named Marcus. Marcus is a retired army captain, and his favorite subject is why his inn is called the Ice Serpent. It is named (as Marcus proudly points out) for the three stuffed ice serpent heads mounted above the bar. The ice serpents were killed by the army (Marcus led a patrol that killed one), and the heads were donated to the tavern.

Ice serpents are huge, white-furred snakes that sometimes haunt the pass between Wath and K'Pass. Marcus tends to expound at great length on the various aspects of the serpents, especially about the legendary hair-restoring properties of ice-serpent liver oil.

Marcus: AL CG; AC 10; MV 10; F6; hp 41; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 12, D 10, C 9, I 13, W 15, Ch 16; ML 15; short sword, club, dagger.

4. Isig Chasm Bridge. The Isig Chasm Bridge is 20 miles away from the village of Nalv, or about two and a half days travel. The bridge is an important (and vulnerable) part of the Overmountain Highway, so a permanent army garrison is stationed in a nearby fort. As the PCs approach the bridge, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Today's weather has been truly hellish. Snow comes down in fits and starts, and the temperature is well below freezing. Conditions are aggravated by the ever-present wind, which grows in intensity as you approach the Isig Chasm. The Isig river valley extends all the way to Naka's Ocean and runs straight for a good deal of that length. A fierce, howling wind blows down off the Dividing Mountains, funnelled and channeled by the walls of the chasm.
>
> The turnoff to the small army fort that guards the bridge falls behind as you trudge on, and eventually the bridge itself comes within sight. A woman in an army uniform comes out of the guardhouse beside the bridge as you approach. Several other people remain inside the small silver-granite building. The woman keeps a tight grip on the wooden railing that runs along the guard post, and you notice a rope around her waist connects her to something sturdy inside the guardhouse. Even so, she stumbles several times as the fierce winds contrive to lift her off her feet. The bridge gates are shut, and the narrow bridge surface is coated with a thick layer of ice.

Private Baker (the woman coming out of the guardhouse) waves the party to a stop about 50' from the edge of the chasm and shouts over the wind, "The bridge is closed down for as long as the wind lasts. We shut it down earlier today after a soldier got blown off." The bridge looks very unsafe. Great gusts of wind blast out of the chasm, battering the PCs even where they stand. The Isig river is frozen beneath the bridge, more than 800' below.

After giving the PCs a few minutes to absorb the situation, Baker recommends that the PCs stay at the inn adjacent to the garrison, at least until the wind dies down a bit. The Soldier's Arms Inn is a clean, efficient, army-run hostel located two miles back up the Overmountain Highway, off the small turn-off that leads to the army fort. The hostel makes a great deal of money this time of year, because the fierce winter winds can shut down the bridge for days at a time. A night's lodging costs 5 sp per person for a room, including meals. A berth in the common room costs 3 sp per night, also including meals.

If the PCs elect to stay at the Soldier's Arms, the wind delays the PCs for two days before it dies down enough to make the bridge safe to cross.

Baker and her companions will let the PCs cross immediately, if they insist. The soldiers loudly disclaim any responsibility for whatever happens to the party. Baker does not even charge the PCs the normal 1 sp per head toll, saying, "Anyone crazy enough to cross that bridge deserves a break."

The DM should allow the success of any reasonable scheme for crossing the bridge. Someone with the mountaineering proficiency can easily rig up a rope harness to convey PCs and animals across the bridge in relative safety. Or the DM could allow rogue characters to use their wall climbing ability. Obviously, if the PCs try to simply waltz across the bridge, the wind (gusts up to 100 MPH) will blow them off to their deaths. Anyone who attempts to *fly* or *levitate* across the chasm takes 2-8 hp battering damage from the wind during the crossing. A saving throw vs. paralyzation for half damage is allowed.

Soldiers (5, including Baker): AL NG; AC 6; MV 12; F1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; studded leather armor, shield, short sword, short bow, dagger.

5. The Blizzard. On the third day after the PCs leave P'Arte, a blizzard hits the Overmountain Highway in the vicinity of the PCs. The blizzard strikes in mid-afternoon. (Please review the information on blizzards found in the Random Encounters table.)

Normal procedure for traveling along the highway is to stop at a shelter for a noon meal and rest. When the PCs stop at noon on this day, roll a proficiency check for any in the party with the weather-sense proficiency. If the check is successful, inform that PC that "a blizzard is going to hit this area sometime in the next 3-6 hours." Since it typically takes 4-5 hours to cover the distance between shelters, the PCs may want to stay here to ride out the blizzard.

If no one in the party has the weather-sense proficiency (or a suitable spell), do not give the PCs any warning about the imminent blizzard. Storms, blizzards, and snow can strike with lightning speed and little or no warning along the highway!

If the PCs proceed after the noon rest stop, the blizzard hits when the PCs are half a mile from the next shelter. There is no warning. One minute the weather is cloudy with a few flakes of snow (standard), and the next minute the wind picks up and great gusts of snow howl down out of the sky.

It will take the PCs four turns to cover the remaining distance to the shelter. The wind speed is 40 MPH, so everyone in the party must make four hypothermia saves (one every turn) with a −3 penalty to each roll. The chance of getting lost is 30% (rather than 50%) because of the short distance involved. If someone with the direction sense ability makes a successful proficiency check, the PCs will not get lost.

Once it hits, the blizzard lasts the rest of that day plus two more days. The weather clears up on the morning of the third day, and the PCs can move on (see the example calendar). This encounter drives home the deadly nature of the winter weather along the highway.

6. The Roaring Dragon. The section of the Overmountain Highway between Wath and K'Pass is confined to a narrow, high-altitude pass. The surrounding mountains tower thousands of feet above the road through the pass. Although the road itself is classified as

"low mountain" terrain, the elevation is still extreme (see pages 123-125 of the *DMG*). If any combat (from random encounters) occurs in the pass, the PCs suffer a −1 penalty to all combat rolls because of the elevation.

When the PCs are about 10 miles (two and a half days hard travel) past Wath, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> The elevation of the pass makes battling through the snow an immensely difficult task. It is only mid-afternoon, and already your limbs protest their limits and scream "enough!" At least it isn't snowing, and the sun occasionally peeks its way through the clouds. Suddenly, far above you near the peaks of the tall mountains that tower above the pass, you see a dragon! The magnificent white beast swoops and dives through the air, just visible through gaps in the cloud cover. For a moment you simply watch in admiration; the dragon looks truly beautiful, a creature at home in its element.
>
> With a dawning sense of alarm, you watch as the dragon banks toward one of the snowy slopes above you. The white beast turns and flies roughly parallel to a huge, tenuously balanced snowbank. The dragon inhales with a visible effort, then lets out an earsplitting roar. Seconds later, in answer to the dragon's call, a deep bass roar booms down the mountainside. The dragon has caused an avalanche, and now thousands of tons of ice and snow are barreling down the mountainside toward your current position!

The PCs have 1d3 + 1 rounds to prepare for the onslaught of the avalanche, which is a small one despite its fearsome appearance. Anyone (or anything) that gets hit by the avalanche takes 2-20 hp damage (save vs. paralyzation for half damage). If any PCs or animals take damage from the avalanche, getting them dug out, cleaned up, and past the now-blocked pass delays the party for half a day.

If the PCs ask (quickly!), the DM should tell them that there is a natural formation nearby that will serve to protect them from the avalanche. If the PCs react immediately, they can all run behind a boulder (about 30' in diameter) that is located nearby. If the PCs do not ask about possible cover, assume that they are too flustered to take a look around and assess the situation.

If the PCs take cover behind the boulder, the front wave of the avalanche crashes down around them just as they reach its leeward side. The PCs get buried up to waist height (3') in the snow that spills around the sides of the boulder, but this snow is loose enough that no one will have a problem getting out. If the party takes refuge behind the boulder, they can move on without any significant delay.

The culprit behind the avalanche is an old white dragon known as Weisshammar. After causing the avalanche, Weisshammar gains a few thousand feet of altitude, then circles around to watch the fun. Weisshammar does not attack the PCs after causing the avalanche; he was just having fun. He is also very leery of attacking anything on the Overmountain Highway; this caution which is one of the reasons why he is an old dragon. Weisshammar lives in an ice cave far up one of the mountain glaciers. The DM is free to develop details on his lair if necessary.

Weisshammar (white dragon): Int 7; AL CE; AC −3; MV 12, fly 40 (C), burrow 6, swim 12; HD 15; hp 92; THAC0 −3; #AT 3 plus special; Dmg 1d6 + 8/1d6 + 8/2d8 + 8; SA *fear* (30 yards), spell-like abilities, create avalanche, breath weapon; SD special; MR 20%; SZ G (77'); ML 15; XP 11,000; MC.

Volkrad

The circumstances surrounding the final delivery of X'Celsiah's tax money are intentionally left somewhat vague. The DM can make the actual delivery as easy or as challenging as he desires. The scenario outlined below gives the DM a starting point but certainly does not touch on all the difficulties the PCs could have during their stay in the capital city of Volkrad.

Volkrad is a sprawling port city on the coast of the Unbandig Sea, near the mouth of the Tieglen River. The city has a population of roughly 80,000. Compared to L'Trel, Volkrad is an enormous metropolis, so it will be very easy for the PCs to get lost in the byways and far-flung districts of Volkrad.

The Tax Office

The PCs will not be able to find the tax office by themselves; they will have to ask a few of Volkrad's notoriously unfriendly inhabitants how to find it. The DM can give the PCs a little hassle about finding the office if he wishes, but if the PCs have done well up to this point, they probably deserve a break.

Volkrad's tax office is a multistoried, almost palatial building made primarily of marble. During the day, people run in and out of it in droves, and the tempo does not slow down much at night. From December 25th to January 10th, the office is open to the public from 5:00 A.M. to midnight, seven days a week. During all other times of the year, it is open from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday.

In order to gain entrance to the tax offices, the PCs must check their weapons at the door. The guards are very thorough and demand that the PCs divest themselves of all weapons. People sometimes get a little upset in this building, and catastrophe could result if the guards let so much as a dagger slip by.

Guards (6): AL any N or G; AC 5; MV 9; F2, F1 (×5); hp 15, 7 (×5); THAC0 19, 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 15; chain mail, spear, short sword, dagger.

Confrontation with Ira

After the PCs clear the minor hurdle of finding and gaining entrance to the tax office, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> After having a little trouble finding the tax office, things start going smoothly for once in this accursed journey. The sealed message tube bearing Lord X'Celsiah's engraved seal is like having a magical wand. A simple wave of the tube causes the various minor functionaries to go through an abrupt change of attitude, from surly and taciturn to cheerful and overly helpful. A babbling young man guides you deep into the building, through several impressive offices that he assures you are "just waiting rooms." Finally, in an out-of-the-way back corridor, you come to a heavily carved door labeled "Hiram Parma, Tax Minister." The eager fellow opens the door for you and gestures for you to step inside.
>
> The office inside is spacious, beautiful, and opulent. The room is kept warm by a large marble fireplace

that dominates one wall. A window of crystal-clear glass covers another wall, revealing a view of the street far below. A small door in one wall evidently leads to a closet or perhaps a washroom. A painfully thin, immaculately dressed, white-haired old man with hawklike features is seated behind a massive oak desk. He does not look up when you enter, even though your armor clinks loudly and the thump of your boots reverberates throughout the entire room. Finally the man looks up, but only when your young guide breathlessly spills out, "My lord, these people are here to deliver Lord X'Celsiah's taxes!"

The man behind the desk pushes his chair back and stands, a slow smile spreading across his face. "Good to see you! I didn't expect you this soon. Frankly, when I heard of X'Celsiah's predicament, I expected the weather to slow you down more than it evidently did. Well done! Have a seat, and I'll see about getting you a receipt."

The introductory paragraphs are deliberately worded to give the players several false impressions. The introduction suggests that the man behind the desk is Lord Hiram Parma. However, the man is actually Lord Ira Sarvice, the deputy tax minister of Volkrad. The small door really leads to Lord Hiram's inner office. As the deputy tax minister, part of Ira's job is to sit in the outer office and deal with mundane matters so that Lord Hiram is not unnecessarily bothered. Ira sometimes does his job a little too well. Astute players will be suspicious of this set-up, since the description of the man behind the desk does not quite match the description of Lord Hiram that X'Celsiah gave to the PCs.

Playing out this part of the adventure requires the DM to use a very delicate touch. The DM must give the players enough information so that, if they are clever, they can determine this is not Lord Hiram, but the DM must also make sure that he does not give this fact away. If the DM feels that the clues in the description for this encounter are insufficient to make the PCs paranoid, perhaps X'Celsiah could warn the PCs at the beginning of the adventure to "be careful of Lord Hiram's deputy minister. He's a snake."

Lord Ira was told by Lord Hiram to look for the PCs arrival in connection with the delivery of X'Celsiah's taxes. Ira has realized that if he can get X'Celsiah's money away from the PCs, he will have an ideal opportunity for revenge. Once Ira has the money in his hands, he will see to it that the official copy of the receipt is "accidently" burned with the trash, removing all official record of X'Celsiah's payment. Then the message tube containing the money will "accidently" be placed on a back shelf under a pile of junk.

As a result of Ira's scheme, Volkrad's bureaucracy will count X'Celsiah as delinquent in paying her taxes. She will then be fined 26,000 gp (double the amount she would have owed over the last three years, if she had not been exempt), more than enough to exhaust all of her cash reserves. Even if the "mistake" is uncovered a few months later, Ira will plead that it was an innocent error, and the damage to X'Celsiah's finances will be irreparable.

Ira has thought of several schemes to trick the PCs into giving him the money. Ira's first tactic is to simply let the PCs assume that he is Hiram. Ira never actually says that he is Hiram, but if the PCs assume that he is, do not do anything to correct their mistake! If this simple tactic fails, Ira makes some sort of diversion (dropping a pen on the floor and scrambling under the desk to recover it, etc.) and uses one or more of his *suggestion* spells to suggest to the PCs that they should give him the message tube containing the tax money. The DM should come up with several other ways for Ira to deceive the PCs into giving him the money. Ira is a smooth, utterly ruthless master of deception, so it should be very difficult to actually catch him doing anything illegal or telling any actual lies. Ira has a legitimate-sounding excuse for everything he does. ("I'm sorry I tried to cast a spell on you," he'll say, "but Lord Hiram would have my hide on the wall if I let him be disturbed right now. I'm just trying to do my job.")

If everything fails and the PCs find out that he is not Hiram, Ira still refuses to let the PCs see the tax minister. Ira has one final ploy. If he can get the PCs to stay at the Lion's Pryde Inn (see encounter description), he can have them robbed. He tells the PCs, "I can't possibly let you in to see him today. Why don't you come back tomorrow? He's very busy, and he'd literally kill me if I let him be disturbed. Here's a voucher to stay at the Lion's Pryde Inn for a few days. It's on us." If the PCs arrive on (or after) December 31st, the DM will have to change this ploy.

The PCs can easily bluff their way past Ira and get to see Lord Hiram directly. One of the easiest ways is to simply make as large a disturbance as possible. Eventually, guards (see the statistics at the beginning of this section) will show up to see what all the fuss is about. Lord Hiram then pokes his head out of the small door leading to the inner office and gruffly inquires as to what is going on. At this point, Ira knows he is defeated and he backs down. The PCs have just made a real enemy, though. Inventive PCs will come up with a myriad nonviolent ways to get past Ira, once they determine that he is not Lord Hiram.

Meeting with Lord Hiram Parma

Once the PCs bluff their way into the inner office or otherwise get in contact with Lord Hiram, he spends a few minutes looking over X'Celsiah's tax forms. After a short time he expresses satisfaction and gives the PCs a receipt to take back to X'Celsiah.

Hiram has a good laugh over any confrontations the PCs had with Lord Ira and acknowledges that his deputy minister is a cad of the vilest kind. Lord Hiram does not have any choice about having Ira as his deputy minister (Ira and Hiram are both appointed by the ruling Council of Lords), so Hiram tries to keep him too busy to do any damage. This tactic also allows Hiram to keep a watchful eye on Ira's doings.

The Lion's Pryde

The Lion's Pryde is a small luxury inn located in one of the finest sections of Volkrad. Lord Ira Sarvice is the owner of the inn, although this is a carefully kept secret. Not even the head innkeeper knows who actually owns the inn. Ira gives orders to the innkeeper by relaying them through several people.

If the PCs follow Ira's suggestion and stay at the Lion's Pryde, Ira orders (through a relay involving several people, of course) his section of the local thieves' guild to rob the PCs of X'Celsiah's tax money. Remember that this is a well-organized, guild-backed robbery

attempt. The DM should feel free to modify the actions of the robbers in response to PC actions. The robbers do everything they can to cover up the real reason for the robbery and to hide the fact that Ira ordered it.

When the PCs check in for the night, the manager gives them a fine, sumptuous suite of rooms (the DM is free to develop a map if he desires). Ira's people then begin to watch the PCs from adjacent buildings and from within the inn itself (thieves' guild people work in the inn as bellhops, maids, etc.). The thieves wait for a good opportunity to rob the PCs. Ideally, they are waiting for a time when most of the PCs are out of their rooms and away from the tube. Such an opportunity may arise when the PCs go to dinner. If all else fails, the robbers wait until night, when most of the PCs are asleep.

If the players state that the PCs take a good look around the hotel and the surrounding buildings, the DM may wish to assign a small chance that they spot the watchers. Allow thieves the use of their ability to find traps in order to detect the watchers.

To cover the real intent of the robbery, several people (in cooperation with the robbers) posing as merchants, or traders, move into the rooms adjacent to the PCs' suite. When the robbers move against the PCs, these "merchants" are also robbed. This ploy should serve to disguise the fact that the robbers are really interested in only X'Celsiah's money. The PCs may be suspicious, but this decoy will serve to convince the local police that it was a normal robbery.

When the robbers decide to make their move (DM's judgment), they introduce sleeping gas into each PC's room through the crack under the hall door. Everyone in the PCs' suite must save vs. poison or fall asleep for 1d20 + 20 rounds. A successful save means that the PC detected something amiss and managed to hold his breath. A PC can continue to hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his constitution scores divided by three. If the PC breathes again, he must save vs. poison again, this time with a −4 penalty. Five rounds after the gas is first introduced into the room, it dissipates and becomes harmless. At this point, the robbers enter the room.

Each of the thieves carries a loaded crossbow. Their first action is to subdue any conscious PCs. Then they tie and gag all of the PCs. Four of the heavies then stand guard over the PCs while the others help the thief-in-charge search the room. If the PCs hid X'Celsiah's tube carefully, it will take the robbers 1-10 rounds to find it. The robbers also take any other valuable items that they find (DM's discretion), in order to disguise the intent of the robbery.

If any of the bound and gagged PCs wiggles too much, the guards discourage them by motioning with their crossbows. If the PC continues to move, the guards shoot to kill. The inescapable death rule (page 75 of the *DMG*) applies here.

After the robbers leave, the PCs can begin extracting themselves from the ropes. Roll against half of each PC's bend-bars/lift gate ability, or allow a character with the rope-use proficiency to work himself loose in 1d10 + 10 rounds. Otherwise, it takes three turns to wiggle free of the ropes.

Thief-in-charge: AL LE; AC 8; MV 12; T6, hp 24; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA special; ML 15; XP 975; leather armor, short sword, light crossbow. The thief's first crossbow quarrel is poisoned (save vs. poison for half damage or take 6-36 hp damage).

Heavies (7): AL N; AC 8; MV 12; F2; hp 15, 14, 12, 9 (×2), 8, 7; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; ML 14; XP 65; leather armor, short sword, light crossbow.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs successfully deliver the tax money to Lord Hiram on or before the December 31st deadline, the DM should consider awarding a 2,000-xp bonus (to be split among the PCs).

If the PCs meet (or beat) the deadline, Lord Hiram sponsors new tax legislation at the next meeting of the Council of Lords. This legislation grants tax immunity for life to anyone of lord status who is also recognized as a hero of the realm. After the new tax law passes, X'Celsiah is given a lifetime exemption from taxation. X'Celsiah uses the money that she would have spent on paying taxes to complete her greatest work, a military text titled "Observations of the Long Campaign." The Volkrad military schools quickly adopt this work as a standard text. Years from now, the insights offered in the text allow Volkrad to repel a massive orc invasion.

If the PCs' mission is successful, X'Celsiah will be very grateful to the party and will prove to be a valuable contact. The DM can use X'Celsiah to feed the PCs information about future adventures. X'Celsiah will also be more than willing to provide PC fighters with level training, either for free or at a greatly reduced cost. Lord Hiram Parma of Volkrad can also be used to introduce new adventures. Perhaps he has a dangerous mission of a delicate nature that he dare not assign to the military.

The PCs will also make at least two new enemies if they succeed in their mission. Lord Rhet and Lord Ira are primarily interested in making X'Celsiah miserable, but they may shift some of their energies toward the PCs. Both of these NPCs are dangerous, not so much because of their personal prowess but because of their extensive connections and wealth, and the number of people at their command. Also, although Rhet and Ira do not know each other now, they are likely to meet at some time in the future and discover their mutual hatred of X'Celsiah and the PCs.

If the PCs fail in their mission (deliver the taxes after January 10th, or not at all), X'Celsiah will be very displeased with them and will not hesitate to tell everyone in L'Trel the tale of how they failed her. The hardship brought on by paying the fines and back taxes will prevent X'Celsiah from writing her revolutionary military textbook. It is up to the DM to decide on any further consequences of the book's absence. Perhaps the nation of Volkrad will fall to the invading orc hordes after all.

Presumably, the PCs will return to L'Trel along the Overmountain Highway. Along the way, there are many chances for side adventures. The mountain villages of K'Pass, Wath, Grace, Nalv, P'Arte, and Fidirth Ridge make ideal tie-in points for many of the short adventures found in DUNGEON Adventures. Ω

Continued from page 2

detail help you set an atmosphere, or does it simply take up space?

Some other items on the gamers' wish lists were: mini adventures (we've started a new section for this); guidelines for awarding experience points (we've added XP as a statistic for each "bad guy," but we could be doing more to reward good role-playing); solo adventures (we've probably discussed this to death); one-on-one adventures (I'll print them if you'll write them); low-level and high-level adventures (mostly I get modules for levels 3-8).

Did the convention participants reflect your views, or are there other items on your "wish list" for DUNGEON Adventures? Write and let me know.

This issue's quote was sent in by Daniel B. Cordez of Little Neck, New York. Ω

Barbara G. Young

Mail from the Gulf

Dear Dungeon,

I have a sad story to tell you. A few of my friends and I have been deployed to Saudi Arabia, part of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. Unfortunately, we didn't bring any gaming materials with us. Would you please (pretty please) print my address in your magazine. DMs wanted! Any gamers interested in running a pen-pal game for a few Marines who are in Saudi Arabia, please write!

Semper Fi!

Cp. Don W. Peterson
Co. "A" 3rd AA BN
HQ PLT
FPO San Francisco, California
96608-5522

I'm sure Don and his buddies would like to hear from any of our readers, even if you can't help run a game by mail. Even a postcard would surely be welcome.

Continued from page 19

Shortly thereafter, as the mounted PCs near the edge of the barrow grounds, they see a lone figure standing near a small tree beside the bank of the stream. Sunlight reflects off the warrior's bronze armor and the plumed helmet he holds in the crook of his arm. A great shield and spear lean against the tree.

"Greetings, heroes," the warrior says. "I have been granted this brief stay on your world to give you my thanks." Tarfil then moves to each member of the party and gently lays a hand upon his shoulder. To the living, his touch has the effect of a double strength *restore* spell, or a *cureall* spell for anyone who has lost no experience levels. If any members of the party died in the barrow, Tarfil's touch will *raise dead fully*. After he has touched each party member, Tarfil places his hand upon Sergei's shoulder, saying, "Guide well, traveler," and gives Sergei a *scarab of protection*. Any other character who lost no levels and needed no curing will also receive a *scarab of protection*.

Having said his thanks, Tarfil bows to the party, takes up his spear and shield, and says, "Farewell, adventurers. May you all find high places amongst the gods!" With that, Tarfil leaps away, running at first across the moor, then gradually up into the sky. With a brief flash of light, the ancient warrior disappears from the mortal world.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs destroy Annakarr and his followers and obtain the *Tome of Binding Souls*, they must decide what to do with the book. Annakarr's other followers (those he left behind at his stronghold in the mountains) will scattered without his guidance, but the DM may decide to have some vengeful lieutenant learn of his leader's demise and plague the party at a later time. The escape of Cargilon Darkbringer will have little effect on the party, as he was simply a hired rogue mage and will not consider the party members as enemies should they meet again.

If Lodigris or the two elders escape after the party's success, they will eventually seek retribution. But the escape of Annakarr will be of most concern to the party, as he meant every threat he uttered when he fled the barrow. All thoughts of conquest will be set aside in his desire for revenge, and Annakarr will spare none of his diverse resources, including several spies based in Kelvin.

If the PCs flee the barrow after failing to defeat Annakarr, they may be asked at a later time to help stave off Annakarr's undead army. Baron Kelvin may ask them to lead a force of mercenaries against Annakarr in battle on the moor or in the mountains. Or perhaps an embarrassed Bishop Pyotrevich will send them to Annakarr's mountain stronghold to free Tarfil at the request of the Immortals.

If any of the PCs were captured by Annakarr in the tomb, they are taken back to the patriarch's stronghold for sacrifice in the Temple of Chaos as gratitude for the mission's success. This leaves the defeated party some, albeit bleak, hope of escape.

If the PCs successfully defeat Annakarr and return to Kelvin, there will be no official recognition of their accomplishment unless they bring Annakarr back in chains. However, should the adventurers pass through Karameikos again in the next year or two, they may hear a Traladaran minstrel singing about a noble band of heroes who thwarted the aims of Chaos, dealing terrible justice upon an evil patriarch named Annakarr the Despised. The Karameikan nobility and prelacy may have ignored the PCs achievements, but with the help of a Traladaran commoner named Sergei Mishev, word of their deeds has spread and been put to song.

Many years later, Ivan Sumanov will rise to wield much power in the Church of Traladara, as he truly has been marked for greatness by the Three Immortals. Ivan will become a very influential person in Karameikos, and thus a good person with whom to be on favorable terms. Ω

The Oops File

There is an error in the map of Caer Thorne, Level Four, on page 58 of issue #25. There should be a small spiral staircase that gives access to room 58. The placement of this staircase can be seen in room 47 on the previous map (page 57).

Continued from page 23

Goblin worg-riders (8): Int avg; AL LE; AC 6; MV 6 (on foot); HD 1−1; hp 7, 6, 5 (×3), 4 (×2), 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA charge on worgback (+2 to hit, double damage with light lance, MV 27 for one round, but with −2 to opponent's initiative and AC loss of one point); SZ S (4' tall); ML 10; XP 15; MC.

Worg-riders wear studded leather armor, use small shields, and carry spears that are the equivalent of light horse lances (5 lbs., speed 6, 1d6/1d8 or 2d6/2d8 if used while charging). Each goblin also carries a short sword. In combat, they are charged with keeping warriors away from the mastodon and disabling spell-casters as quickly as they can be found.

Free worgs (12): statistics as per worg mounts; hp 25, 24, 21 (×2), 20, 17 (×2), 16, 15 (×2), 14, 13, 11. These worg act as regular soldiers. Their mission is to leap into combat and attack all foes impartially, not worrying about any other goblins or worgs unless a call for retreat is given. They also scout around as the goblin juggernaut sets out for a raid, looking for areas of potential trouble and communicating this to the goblins and other worgs.

Handling the Problem

It is obvious that a mastodon loaded with goblins, backed up by worgs and goblin cavalry, is a very tough customer. Direct combat with the monster is possible for high-level groups, but other adventurers might want to think of sneakier ways of eliminating this annoying situation.

Obvious tactics include picking off the worgs, mounted worgs, and worg-riders in small batches using missiles or spells. Ambushes, traps, and illusions may be used to divide or misdirect the goblins and worgs. Especially careful PCs such as rangers and thieves might be able to track the goblins back to their local dungeon lair after a battle, staging an attack when the goblins least expect or are prepared for it.

Goblins have relatively few hit points, and a single *fireball* would clean all of them from the mastodon in a moment—with the result that the mastodon appears to go wild for a short time before vanishing from sight (having turned into a statuette again). The DM might wish to save this encounter for a time when no *fireball*-toting wizards are present, but even a clever mage might find the the worgs difficult to handle prior to the main combat.

Further Adventures

Assuming that the goblins are defeated and the *marble mastodon* is seized, the most obvious questions are: Where did these goblins come from, and how did they get a mastodon? A ranger might be able to track the goblins back to their lair (discovering, of course, that the mastodon's footprints abruptly cease part of the way back!). Konkar and his troops are currently staying in the small hillside dungeon system where the *marble mastodon* was found, several miles from the trade route. A map is provided of this lair, about which the DM should keep a few points in mind:

—The dungeon is an old tomb with only a few corridors and rooms, now all thoroughly explored by the goblins. The original traps have all been sprung, but the goblins have reset two of the pit traps in areas they don't frequent. They have also covered the single dungeon entrance with brush and tree limbs to prevent its easy discovery (a roll for detecting concealed doors is required by an elf or half-elf, or a ranger must make a successful tracking roll).

—There is no obvious place that a monster the size of the mastodon could enter the tomb (it is always reduced in size when Konkar takes it inside).

—Living arrangements are crude in the extreme, though Konkar does have a rough sort of bed assembled from cloth and debris from destroyed wagons.

—A total of 2,000 gp of treasure can be found in the lair, most of it in the form of trade goods, armor, weapons, tools, and loose coins (as designed by the DM). No other magical items are present.

—A dozen goblins and four worgs remain at the tomb as guards during the times when Konkar is out raiding. The statistics for these guards may be taken from those in the section, "The Juggernaut & Crew."

—The being originally buried in the tomb might now be undead and might take a dislike to anyone, goblin or human, whom it finds dismantling its "home." This being might still be entombed but slowly becoming more active, preparing an attack on the intruders.

Captured goblins are fiercely loyal to Konkar if he has not yet been slain. The goblins refuse to talk except to unceasingly curse their captors and threaten them with hideous deaths at the "hands" (or feet) of the "demon," about which they say nothing else. The use of *ESP* or *charm person* spells should produce some accurate but confusing information for the PCs (the goblins believe that the mastodon really is a demon, and battle memories tend to be greatly exaggerated). Remember that goblins are cowardly, treacherous, crude, and somewhat stupid.

It should become obvious that, given the lack of females and young in the lair and given its spartan conditions, the goblins must have come from a larger lair elsewhere. Tracking down this home lair would be a tricky operation given its distance (a minimum of 15-20 miles is suggested). The DM can thus connect this encounter to any goblin or humanoid stronghold, such as "Tallow's Deep," from DUNGEON® issue #18.

Any goblins who escape the PCs will flee the area, heading back for the home lair (although they will make some effort to scout the PCs briefly after a battle to get a better idea of who their enemies are). The goblins will inform the home lair's chief of the existence of Konkar's device (which they, of course, had planned to bring to the chief as a gift all along). It is then a certainty that a major raiding party (if not an army) of goblins and humanoids will swiftly set out to recapture the *marble mastodon*. Word of the device will spread like wildfire among other humanoid and monster tribes in the region and, eventually, among human and demihuman thieves and treasure hunters—all with predictable results. Ω

The Oops File

The map of the Hellfire Club on page 19 of issue #25 was printed with an error. On the First Floor, the diagonally shaded area that is over the Kitchen should be moved so that the right edge of the shaded area touches the west wall of the Kitchen. This shaded area denotes the second floor overhang above the east side of the Ballroom.

BRIDE FOR A FOX

BY CRAIG BARRETT

This web of deceit snares victim, hero, and villain alike.

Artwork by Jim Holloway

Craig sends the following advice for readers who would like to sell adventures or articles to DUNGEON® Adventures or DRAGON® Magazine: "Write what you would like to read. Write with this in mind: If you had not written the article or module, would it be worth the cost of an issue for you to read this piece? If you regularly read and enjoy these magazines, you know the kind of material they print. If you have any talent at all, and if you write with this in mind, I believe you will sell. Be warned, however, that a painful level of self-honesty is required."

"Bride for a Fox" is an AD&D® Oriental adventure for 4-6 player characters of levels 4-8 (about 30 total levels). One of these characters should be a shukenja; at least one should be a samurai of 5th level or higher, thus immune to fear. All should be capable of riding. Vital equipment should include at least two flasks of sake and one magical ring (of any kind). The PCs should also have weapons to defend themselves against airborne attackers, and should have at least one +3 magical weapon. It will be convenient if the party includes enough henchmen or followers to bring the group's total up to eight members.

This adventure takes place in the T'u Lung province of Ausa, beginning in the city of Chunming in the Shin District, but can be easily set in any similarly placed city in any civilized nation of Kara-Tur. The *Kara-Tur: The Eastern Realms* boxed set is useful but not necessary for play.

For the Dungeon Master

Five years ago, the merchant Mah Tehwa made a bargain with the hu hsien O-me-sa (whose current lair was not far from Jengse village, northwest of Chunming): If the hu hsien helped Tehwa's business to prosper, the merchant would give his daughter to the hu hsien when she was 15 years old. Although O-me-sa was one of those rare hu hsien whose second form is that of an attractive teenage boy rather than a maiden, Tehwa had the distinct impression that he wanted the girl for something other than the obvious reasons. This didn't deter Tehwa from making the bargain.

Over the years, Mah Tehwa's business prospered greatly due to O-me-sa's *reward* spells. When his daughter, Mah

Su-liang, approached her 15th birthday, a message arrived from O-me-sa with instructions to have the girl ready to depart at dawn on the fateful day.

The timing could not have been worse for Mah Tehwa. The elderly Prince Wan had seen the girl and become attracted to her. By adroit maneuver, Tehwa had arranged for Su-liang to be married to Prince Wan, giving Tehwa much honor through a connection many steps above his own station. Prince Wan was also in a position to arrange for Tehwa to receive highly valuable trade concessions. If Su-liang were surrendered to O-me-sa, these important plans would be ruined. Not only that, Tehwa would have to explain the girl's disappearance—and Imperial law imposed a penalty of death by torture for bargains such as Tehwa had made.

But Tehwa had already decided to cheat the hu hsien. Three months before Su-liang's 15th birthday, he visited a center of the local slave trade. There he found and purchased a slave girl named Kui-lo, of approximately Su-liang's age and appearance. Since then, Kui-lo has been his daughter's companion and maid—and, much to Tehwa's delight, the two girls have become close friends.

The morning after O-me-sa's message arrived, at the start of Su-liang's birthweek, Tehwa brought Kui-lo to his private study and told her a long and involved story—utterly false—about how an ancient secret of family shame had fallen into the hands of a hu hsien. In order to preserve his family's honor, Tehwa would have to turn Su-liang over to the hu hsien. But, he said, Kui-lo had it in her power to save her new friend, if she would take her place. The young, impressionable slave had no will to fight Tehwa's persuasiveness and agreed to impersonate Su-liang when O-me-sa's emissary came to collect the girl.

So far as Tehwa was concerned, his plan was working perfectly, for he had little fear that the hu hsien would concern himself with news of princely weddings. Once Su-liang's birthweek ended, she could wed Prince Wan. However, unknown to him, Su-liang had adopted a balcony beneath the roof as her private mediation place. By a trick of acoustics she heard the entire interview with Kui-lo. Believing Tehwa's story to be true, Su-liang determined that if anyone must be sacrificed for the sake of the family's honor, it must be her, not Kui-lo.

Thus, at dawn on her birthday, it was Su-liang (suitably attired as if to be a bride, but masked to hide her identity) who rose first and presented herself to O-me-sa's emissary.

Shortly after Su-liang left her father's house, Kui-lo (whom Su-liang had arranged to be delayed by other servants) presented herself to Tehwa's servants, and Tehwa quickly learned of the mistake. He immediately made plans to take Kui-lo after the emissary and exchange the two girls, explaining that a mistake had been made. Tehwa knew all this girl-switching might look like some kind of treachery to O-me-sa, but what choice did he have? If Su-liang inexplicably disappeared, the Prince would institute inquiries, and if that brought out the truth of Tehwa's bargain, the merchant could quite literally end up as dog meat. He had to recover Su-liang at all costs!

Tehwa sent for his steward, Meng, and ordered Meng to go into the city and hire a half-dozen adventurers to serve as bodyguards for a short period of time. He intended to recover Su-liang, "if I have to go all the way to Jengse." Meng was to follow on his heels with the adventurers. Tehwa's orders weren't clear, though, and Meng was left believing that Tehwa would wait for him before leaving—and that it was Kui-lo who'd been stolen.

For the Player Characters

The DM should read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> Last night you took rooms in the Inn of a Thousand Swords. Being early risers, as befits adventurers, at dawn this morning you're in the inn's common room. Suddenly, without ceremony, a thin man in an expensive robe enters. He looks around as if to pry the secrets out of every corner. When he sees no one else adventurous looking in the inn, he comes immediately to your table and says to you:
>
> "Gentlemen, are you available for employment? I have a contract to offer, 10 tael to each of you for two days' service."

If the PCs express interest, the man continues:

> "Before dawn this morning, a slave girl was stolen from my master, the merchant Mah Tehwa. He desires that the girl be returned to him immediately. The contract I offer is to recover this girl at all costs, before her abductors reach their destination, which is less than a day's journey from here. If you bring her back to my master's house by dusk tomorrow, you will each earn 10 tael and perhaps a bonus. Are you willing to undertake this contract?"

The House of Mah

If the PCs ask any questions about the contract (such as why the girl is so important, or why Mah Tehwa doesn't report the theft to the city magistrates), the man tells them:

"My master will answer all questions. If you are not satisfied, you will be free to refuse the contract."

If the PCs want to get their mounts from the inn's stables before leaving, the man says:

"Please do not trouble yourselves. My master desires to see you at once. If you accept the contract, fresh mounts will be provided." If the PCs do not agree to this, he tells them: "Very well, I regret that you do not wish to accept this contract," and leaves immediately unless the PCs reconsider quickly.

If the PCs accept the contract, the thin man tells them:

> "My name is Meng. Please come with me now."
>
> Meng guides you through the city directly to Mah Tehwa's house near the southwestern city gate. This early in the day, no one bothers you or even pays you much attention. The Mah house is large but modest looking from the outside. A clean-shaven deferential servant opens the front door. As Meng stalks past the servant, leading you into the wide entrance hall of the house, your guide says:
>
> "Inform the master that I have returned with the bodyguards he requires."
>
> The servant, with a servile bow, replies, "Meng-sama, the master has already left."
>
> Meng stops abruptly, and it's obvious that he's surprised and upset by

this announcement. His voice is harsh as he interrogates the servant in front of you.

"Left? When? With whom? Answer!"

The servant is cringing now. "An hour ago, sir. Two personal servants accompanied him, and four warehouse guards, and a woman of the household—Kui-lo, I think."

Meng's agitation visibly increases, and he makes no effort to hide it from you.

"Impossible!" he says. "Kui-lo was stolen last night. It must have been someone else. Who?"

The servant, very low, whispers, "Su-liang?"

Meng's eyes narrow. You hear him say, very softly, "Not . . . possible." Meng turns to you and says, "The master has decided to precede us. I must therefore offer you my master's contract on my own authority. Will you accept the contract?"

If the PCs question him, Meng will be very guarded in his answers. They will get a stock answer if they ask the following questions: Why is this slave girl so important? Who took her? Where is she being taken (and how do you know)? Why aren't the authorities involved?

Meng's answer: "That is the affair of my master, Mah Tehwa. You must ask him. The best thing is to mount and follow my master at once."

If the PCs ask how much opposition they'll have to face, Meng replies:

"Whatever lies between us and perhaps the village of Jengse, to the northwest. Now tell me: Will you accept the contract, or must I look elsewhere?"

If the PCs bargain, Meng will increase the pay offered them in increments of two tael per PC to a maximum of 20 tael per PC (and a promise they can keep any loot taken during the adventure). At that point, Meng loses his patience and says:

"Tell me at once! Do you accept the contract or not?"

If the PCs refuse Meng's final offer, he dismisses them. If the adventurers attempt to watch the house or follow Meng when he leaves, they will fail—the house is extensive, and Meng will leave by a hidden door to consult with his true master after the PCs are dismissed. In this case, the adventure should end at this point.

If the PCs agree to Meng's contract terms:

Meng commands the servant to run to the stables and see that the horses are saddled and ready. He leads you through the house by silent corridors where the doors are all closed, until you come to a makeshift arsenal. On racks against the walls are a dozen javelins, four naginatas, one heavy and two light crossbows, an open chest of quarrels for the crossbows, two daikyus, five quivers containing normal arrows, and six throwing axes. There are also a dozen closed but unlatched flat boxes. Meng tells you:

"This is the arsenal of my master's guardsmen. Please examine the weapons and select any you believe you will need. I will return in a moment."

If the PCs examine the weapons, they find that they are of good quality but unexceptional; none are magical. The open chest contains 50 crossbow quarrels. Each quiver contains 20 arrows. Four of the closed boxes contain 10 arrows each, each box with one kind of arrows: armor piercing, frog crotch, humming bulb, and leaf head. The fifth box contains a dozen shurikens. The sixth contains four uchi-ne (small javelins). The seventh contains 20 tetsubishi (caltrops) and a mesh sack for carrying them. The eighth box contains three parangs. The remaining four boxes are empty, but indentations in their felt linings show they once contained katanas.

Examining and selecting weapons should take a little time. When the PCs are finished—or immediately if any PC should discourteously decide to explore some of the house—Meng returns, dressed in expensive riding leathers.

Meng asks if the PCs are ready to go. When they are:

Meng leads you through other silent corridors and out into a dusty stable yard. Here the grooms have horses saddled and ready, one for each of you. The horses are good but unremarkable, with nothing to choose between them. Meng mounts his own horse and, as soon as you are mounted, leads you out by the stable yard gate.

It is still early in the day, and no one pays any attention to you as you ride through the streets to the southwestern gate. The gate has just opened to admit local tradesfolk from the nearby farms. The gate guards simply watch as you ride through.

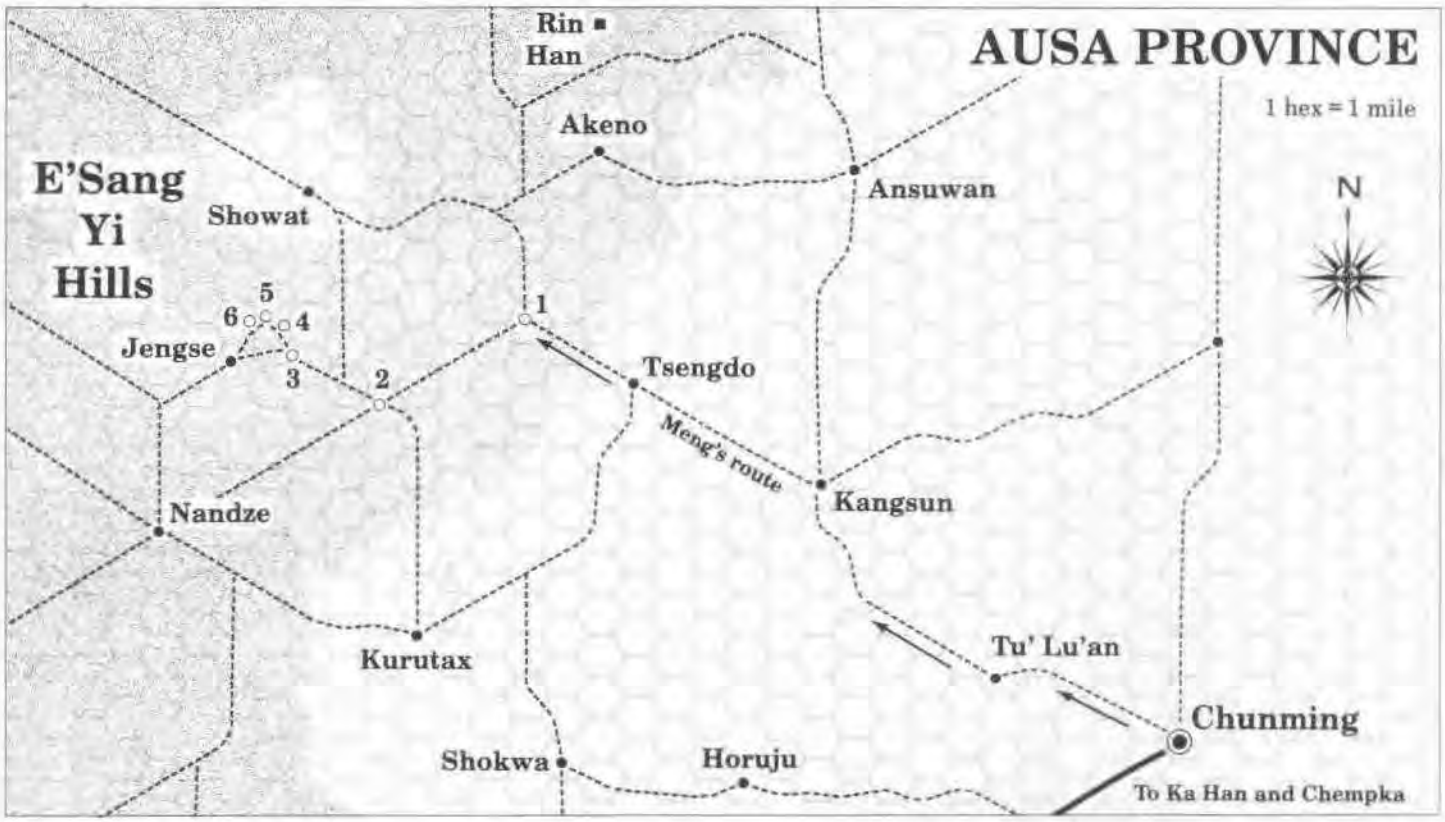
Meng is a traitor, a spy planted in Tehwa's household by Yu Po, a rival merchant prince. When Tehwa sent Meng into the city after adventurers, the steward immediately went to Yu Po and told him as much of the story as he knew. Meng does not know about Tehwa's bargain with O-me-sa, but he does tell Yu Po that Tehwa mentioned the village of Jengse. Yu Po is delighted to learn that Tehwa is exposing himself with only a few guards. He dispatches Meng with orders to do as Tehwa instructed: to find adventurers in the city, hire them, and join Tehwa—but do everything possible to delay Tehwa. In the meantime, Yu Po will assemble a band of assassins to follow and destroy Tehwa. If the PCs accept Meng's contract, the DM should keep in mind that these assassins are following the party.

Meng (human): AL N; AC 10; MV 12; Bus 3; hp 25; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA ki power (+2 levels) once per day for one turn; S 10, D 11, C 9, I 15, W 9, Ch 10; ML 13; XP 270; proficiencies: weaponsmith, armorer, bowyer, stewardship. He now wears expensive riding leathers with no armor value. He carries a dagger in a belt sheath, another in his right boot, and a stiletto in a sheath on his left forearm (hidden by the sleeve of his silk shirt). On the saddle of his horse is a case containing a short horseman's bow and a quiver of 20 normal arrows. In his purse he carries 1,000 ch'ao and 150 tael.

Horses, medium: Int animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 18; HD 2+2; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-3; SZ L; ML 5; MC. Each horse has a standard riding saddle (and blanket), bit, bridle, and small saddle bags, but no barding. One horse is provided for Meng and one for each PC.

Out of the City

Meng leads you a short distance along the high road southwest toward Ka Han and Chempka. He then turns and circles north to intercept



the track that leads northwest from the city toward a branch of the E'sang Yi hills that reaches out in the direction of the coast, north of Chunming. This is clear country, much of it farmland, with no military patrols to be seen. Meng leads you at a rapid pace.

Meng wants to join up with Tehwa as quickly as possible, in order to find ways to delay Tehwa for Yu Po's assassins. He won't, however, push the horses hard enough to ruin them. At optimum speed, it will take the PCs approximately half a day to reach the edge of the E'sang Yi hills (19 or 20 miles). If the PCs try to push harder than this, there is a chance that a horse will give out or come up lame (see the AD&D 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 123).

If the PCs require remounts, they can purchase them at certain villages along the way. Meng will stand the cost out of the cash he's carrying, but bargaining will take 1d6+4 turns—a serious delay. All villages are small farming communities. The tracks connecting them are merely traveled paths across the countryside. Only Kangsun and Tsengdo are large enough to have riding horses for sale.If the PCs ask about Tehwa's party, the villagers have no information but advise against going into the hills. Strange flying creatures have been seen there recently.

1. Ambush in the E'sang Yi Hills. When the PCs enter the hills, their pace will be reduced (see the *DMG*, page 125, values for rolling hills).

After leaving the agricultural plain northwest of Chunming, you enter a wide pass that leads directly into the E'sang Yi hills. Two miles into that pass you come upon a fork in the trail, with one branch leading due north and the other leading southwest. Beside the fork you find a wounded warrior lying propped against a small boulder, a short bow in one hand and arrows lined up on the ground close by, ready for use. Not far from him you can see the corpses of several kenku. Three have been killed by arrows and naginatas, while four others appear to have been felled by powerful lightning strikes.

Meng dismounts beside the wounded man and addresses him by name, speaking loudly enough for you to hear:

"Akemu! What happened here?"

Akemu bows his head but is too badly injured to try to rise. His wounds appear freshly bandaged though without much skill, as though he'd done it himself.

"Meng-san," he says, and gestures at the kenku corpses. "These creatures ambushed us without warning. We killed some, and the others fled when the master threw lightning at them from his ring."

Meng turns to you. "This man is one of Mah Tehwa's guards. He can give us more information. Akemu! Why did the master leave without waiting for me to return?"

"I don't know, Meng-san," Akemu says. Though weariness masks much of his emotions, you can see from his expression that he has little respect for Meng. "The master commanded me, with three other guardsmen, two

servants, and Kui-lo, to accompany him in pursuit of the stolen slave girl. He took no more guards from the warehouses for fear of thieves."

"Kui-lo!" Meng exclaims. "Are you certain?"

"Yes, Meng-san."

"But Kui-lo *is* the stolen slave girl," Meng corrects him.

"No, Meng-san," Akemu tells him. "I don't know who was stolen."

Meng thinks about that for a minute, obviously very troubled, before telling Akemu, "Go on."

Akemu continues: "We made good time until we came here. As I said, the flying creatures attacked without warning. Only the master's magical ring drove the creatures off, or we might all be dead. I was too badly wounded to continue, so the master left me here and continued on, saying he would come back this way." Akemu gives the distinct impression that he's glad he didn't have to go any farther, and he doesn't trust Tehwa to come back for him.

"Which way did the master go?" Meng demands.

Akemu points southwest and Meng nods, as though this merely confirms what he already suspected.

"And the ambushers?"

"They flew in that—" Akemu starts to point due west, then stops abruptly. "They are back!" he exclaims.

To the west, already close and skimming just over the hills, a number of kenku can be seen approaching in a wide arc.

O-me-sa, who does not trust Mah Tehwa, set this band of kenku to watch the track from Chunming, with orders to attack anyone who appears to be chasing Su-liang. After attacking Tehwa's party, they have been reinforced and are on watch again. When the kenku saw Meng talking with the wounded Akemu, they assumed that Meng's party is also chasing Su-liang. The kenku attack immediately and will do all they can to turn the PCs back, but will retreat after taking 25% casualties.

Hereafter, at any given time, the PCs may notice that they're being followed by flying kenku, who maintain a discrete distance but persist in keeping them in sight and are a constant threat. If it appears that the PCs need stronger opposition, the kenku can be used to attack the PCs at any stage of the adventure.

Akemu (human): AL N; AC 7; MV 12; Bus 1; hp 1 (7); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA ki power (+2 levels) once per day for one turn (used); S 12, D 15, C 12, I 10, W 15, Ch 11; ML 11; proficiencies: naginata, weaponsmith, armorer, bowyer. Akemu's naginata is broken, but he retains his bow (12 normal arrows) and katana; he wears leather armor.

Kenku (3d4 +6): Int avg.; AL N; AC 5; MV 6, fly 18 (D); HD 3; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1-6 (claws and bite) or by weapon type; SA *magic missile* (3rd level) once per day; SD *shape change;* MR 30%; SZ M; ML 13; XP 650; FF/56. These bipedal humanoid birds are all 4th-level thieves and expert fighters armed with quarterstaves and katanas. They can *shape change* once every 30 days (with a maximum of seven days spent in the new shape) and have a 50% chance of passing for human (with a 5% chance of successfully impersonating Meng, Akemu, or any PC). They do not speak, but communicate telepathically among themselves. They will not attack anyone who's not following Su-liang (Akemu, for example, is safe once he's left behind). The kenku do not carry any treasure.

2. The Ruined Temple. After leaving the site of the ambush, if the PCs go in the direction Akemu indicates, they reach a ruined temple after traveling four miles down the road.

The southwest trail leads you through the hills, but the rugged path winds so that at no point can you see more than half a mile ahead. After about three miles, you come to the northeastern lip of a small valley, a kind of cup in the hills.

Below you is a ruined temple. It appears to have once been set against cliffs to the west, but at some point in the past those cliffs fell, burying much of the monastery and reducing other parts to rubble. You can see activity around the remaining portions of the temple. It soon becomes clear that half a dozen hill giants are hunting for something among the ruins.

West of the temple, the debris of the fallen cliffs will make any approach to the temple difficult and time consuming. On the north, the terrain favors a stealthy approach. From your present position, you can see a route by which you can quickly reach the north gate without being observed. On the east and south the terrain is more open, and any approach has a chance of being detected by one of the giants before you reach the temple.

If the PCs decide not to circle around the temple and not interfere, they will lose Tehwa's trail and not be able to find it again. Tehwa has been pinned down in the ruins by the hill giants. The merchant and his party would have skirted the temple, turning northwest at this point, but they were frightened into the temple ruins by the sudden attack of the giants.

If the PCs decide to avoid the giants, Meng should advise them to find out what the giants are hunting among the ruins, for he suspects it might be one of Tehwa's people. Since he is in effect their employer until they find Tehwa, the PCs ought to agree. If the PCs overrule him, the DM should let them wander indefinitely among the hills, without encounters, until they tire and return to Chunming. A −2 honor penalty is imposed for the improper social behavior of disobedience.

If the PCs return to the temple after this, the DM must decide if they can still rescue Tehwa. Under no circumstances should the PCs be allowed to find O-me-sa or Su-liang without first finding Tehwa; if they do get to Jengse village without first finding Tehwa, it will be only after O-me-sa has already accomplished his purpose and Su-liang is dead.

If the PCs decide to investigate the ruined temple, they may make their final approach from any direction they choose. From the north or west, the PCs can reach the temple without being observed by the giants, but any approach from the east or south has a 25% or 15% chance (respectively) of being detected by one of the giants before the PCs reach the temple.

When the PCs reach the temple, the giants and Tehwa's people are at the locations indicated by the circled letters shown on the Area 2 map. On the east side of the temple, near the northernmost gate on that side, the two S's and the H indicate where two of Tehwa's

servants and one horse were killed by the giants. Two of Tehwa's guardsmen (indicated by circled B's, for bushi) have taken refuge in one of the monks' cells, where the giants haven't yet investigated because of the cramped space. Two terrified horses are trapped in one of the larger rooms, where a giant herded them and is keeping them contained (fresh meat!) until Tehwa's people are hunted down.

The rest of the giants (indicated by circled G's) have spread out through the temple in search of Tehwa's people. Tehwa himself (circled T) is in the westernmost of the larger rooms, where a fallen roof gives him a chance to scramble up and out over the debris should the giants locate him. Kui-lo (circled K) is trapped in the remaining central tower, unable to move because of the giant near the tower (who has not yet located her). The last guard (bushi) is in the ruins of the main temple hall, where two giants are playing cat-and-mouse with him before closing in for the kill.

All the rooms in the monastery are empty of furnishings, having been systematically stripped at the time the cliffs fell and in subsequent decades. The monks' cells are reasonably intact except where the falling cliffs crushed the westernmost of them and brought the roof down on that side. The larger rooms just south of the monks' cells are also largely intact. The inner temple hall and the main temple hall are in complete ruin, with only fragments of their outer walls still standing but plenty of debris in their interiors. Kui-lo's tower is reasonably intact, with a central circular stair leading up five stories to a flat, walled-in roof (where she is now cowering in fear). Each story consists of a single open room that occupies the entire floor. The other two structures indicated on the east side of the temple map have been entirely gutted by fires many years in the past. The remaining walls of the temple are intact as indicated.

If the PCs can rescue Tehwa, he will be greatly pleased—but only if Kui-lo is also rescued alive and unharmed. In that case, he congratulates Meng for his good work and offers a substantial reward to the PCs (twice whatever Meng has agreed to pay them), payable when they all return to Chunming. Tehwa is frantic to continue the pursuit of Su-liang at the fastest possible pace.

If Kui-lo dies or is badly injured, Tehwa will be furious but will want to continue the pursuit anyway; no extra pay will be offered. If Kui-lo is alive but injured, Tehwa will want to take her along if she can be moved at all.

Hill giants (6): Int 6; AL CE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 12+1-2; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 or by weapon type (2-12+7 for oversized clubs); SA hurl rocks for 2-16 hp damage; SD 30% chance to catch thrown rocks; SZ H; ML 13; XP 3,000; MC.

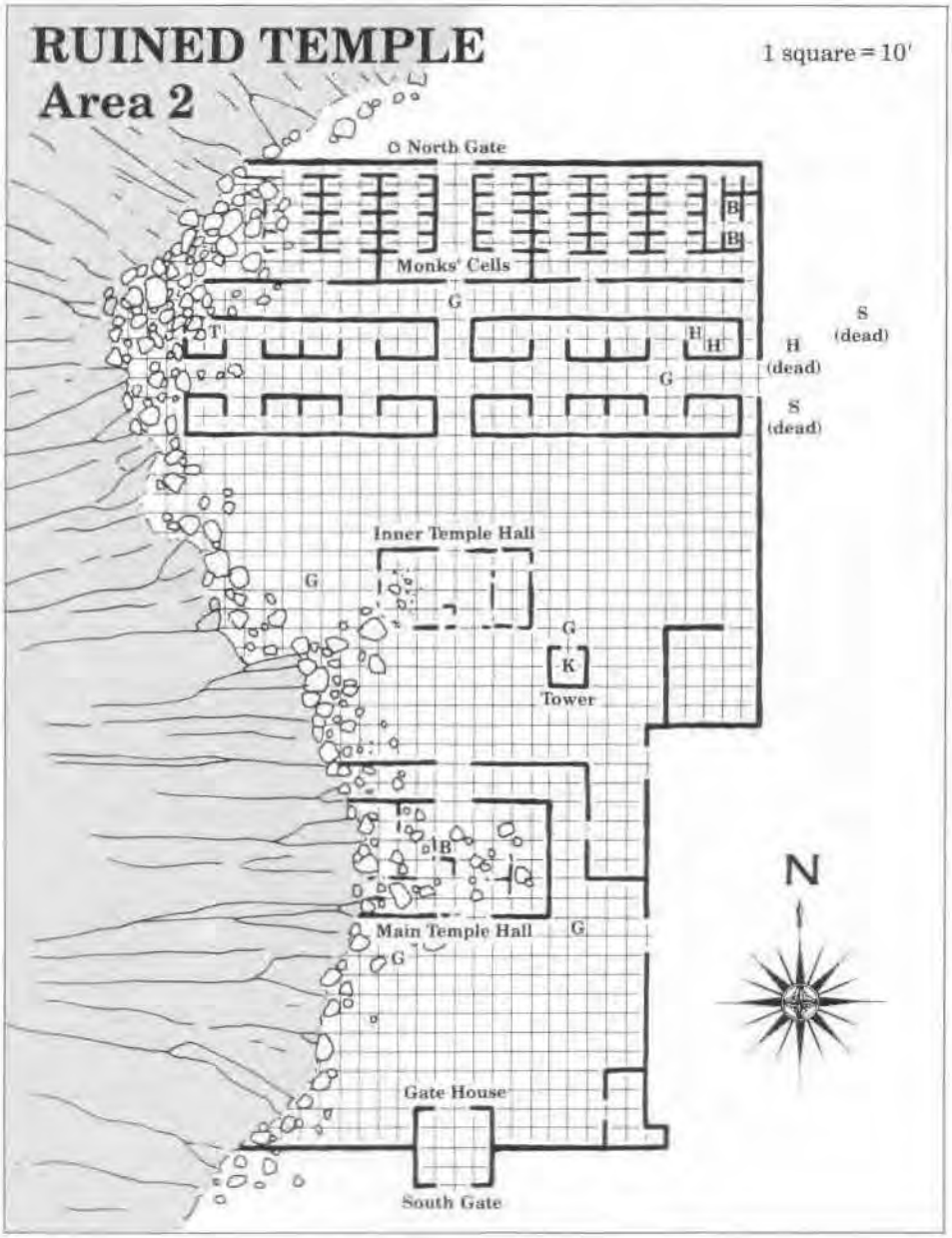
The giants do their best to kill everyone they find in the temple. If the giants suffer 50% casualties, they try to escape unless final victory appears close. They carry no treasure.

Mah Tehwa (human): AL LE; AC 3; MV 12; Bus 6; hp 48; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA ki power (+2 levels) once per day for one turn; S 9, D 15, C 12, I 17, W 10, Ch 15; ML 13; XP 650; proficiencies: weaponsmith, armorer, bowyer, horsemanship, etiquette, forgery, wakizashi.

Tehwa has two magical items with him: *bracers of defense AC 5* (obtained from his foreign merchant contacts; his dexterity and bushi skills lower this to AC 3) and a *ring of lightning* (as a *wand of lightning*, "lightning bolt" effect). He doesn't know how many lightning charges are left in the ring (there are 12 now, and it can be recharged), and he intends to conserve the ring as much as he can. He won't use it against the giants unless he or Kui-lo is in mortal danger. The DM should preserve enough charges for Tehwa to be a serious threat to the PCs if he's still alive and free at the end of the adventure. He carries a wakizashi (a weapon of quality, +1 to hit, nonmagical) and a normal dagger; he also carries 1,500 ch'ao and 250 tael.

Kui Lo (human): AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level; hp 3; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 10, D 15, C 16, I 13, W 12, Ch 16; ML 9. She has two gold rings worth 50 and 75 tael, pearl earrings worth 100 tael each, and two bracelets worth 10 tael each, all supplied by Tehwa. She carries a stiletto in a small sheath inside her left sleeve and is dressed similarly to Su-liang. She will not talk to the PCs any more than she can help, and will not betray any of Su-liang's or Mah Tehwa's secrets.

Guards (3): AL N; AC 7; MV 12; Bus 1; hp 7 each; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; statistics as for Akemu; ML 12;



proficiencies: naginata, weaponsmith, armorer, bowyer. These guards are armed with katanas, naginatas, and bows (2-20 arrows remaining each); each wears leather armor.

Horses, medium: Int animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 18; HD 2+2; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-3; SZ L; ML 5; MC.

The DM should decide whether the PCs can get the two horses the giants have penned inside the temple. If so, these horses will be badly frightened and will need gentle handling before anyone can mount them. In addition to these two horses and the dead horse, Tehwa's original party had five more horses. If the DM feels the party needs additional mounts, he may rule that these horses were freed but stayed near the temple when Tehwa's party was attacked by the giants. Even if the DM allows the PCs to discover one or more of the loose horses, they will not be easy to capture.

If the number of horses is inadequate to mount the entire party, the PCs will have to make the best arrangements they can for continuing the pursuit. Any horses that are ridden by two people at once suffer the same effects as if they were ridden at twice the normal movement rate while ridden in this manner (see the *DMG*, page 123).

3. The Bridge. If the PCs fail to rescue Tehwa, treat this encounter as if they had refused to investigate the ruined temple. If Tehwa is dead, Meng will consider his orders from Yu Po to be fulfilled and will want to return to Chunming. If Kui-lo survives, she is unlikely to speak in the presence of any strange men, and in any case knows nothing about where Su-liang is being taken. Without Tehwa, any further pursuit is hopeless. (Meng, if coerced, could lead the PCs to Jengse village, but not to where Su-liang is really being taken.)

If the PCs rescue Tehwa, he leads the party northwest from the ruined temple toward Jengse village (Tehwa has been this way before, and so is very certain of where Su-liang is being taken). If Meng is still alive, he attempts to delay the party at every opportunity. The DM should play Meng's part to the hilt and give him every reasonable opportunity to delay the party. For example, before leaving the temple, he advises Tehwa to let the party rest for a couple of hours. If he can, he interferes with any effort to recapture Tehwa's surviving horses.

When the PCs reach the "Jengse" hex on the Shin District map, go to the Jengse Valley Map. The party enters this map from the southeast corner.

A little over 2½ miles northwest of the ruined temple, you pass between two hills and find your way blocked by a deep gorge spanned by a narrow suspension bridge. The bridge is unsuitable for horses, and it will be impossible to get them across at this point. Tehwa dismounts and commands:

"We will proceed on foot from here. Get your gear ready. One of you find a place to tether the horses. We will be coming back this way."

While the rest of you do the work, Meng stands with his fists on his hips, studying the country on the other side of the gorge. When you are ready to cross, he says:

"I've been this way before. We may have trouble crossing. One of you stand ready on this side with your bow to cover us."

Tehwa draws his wakizashi.

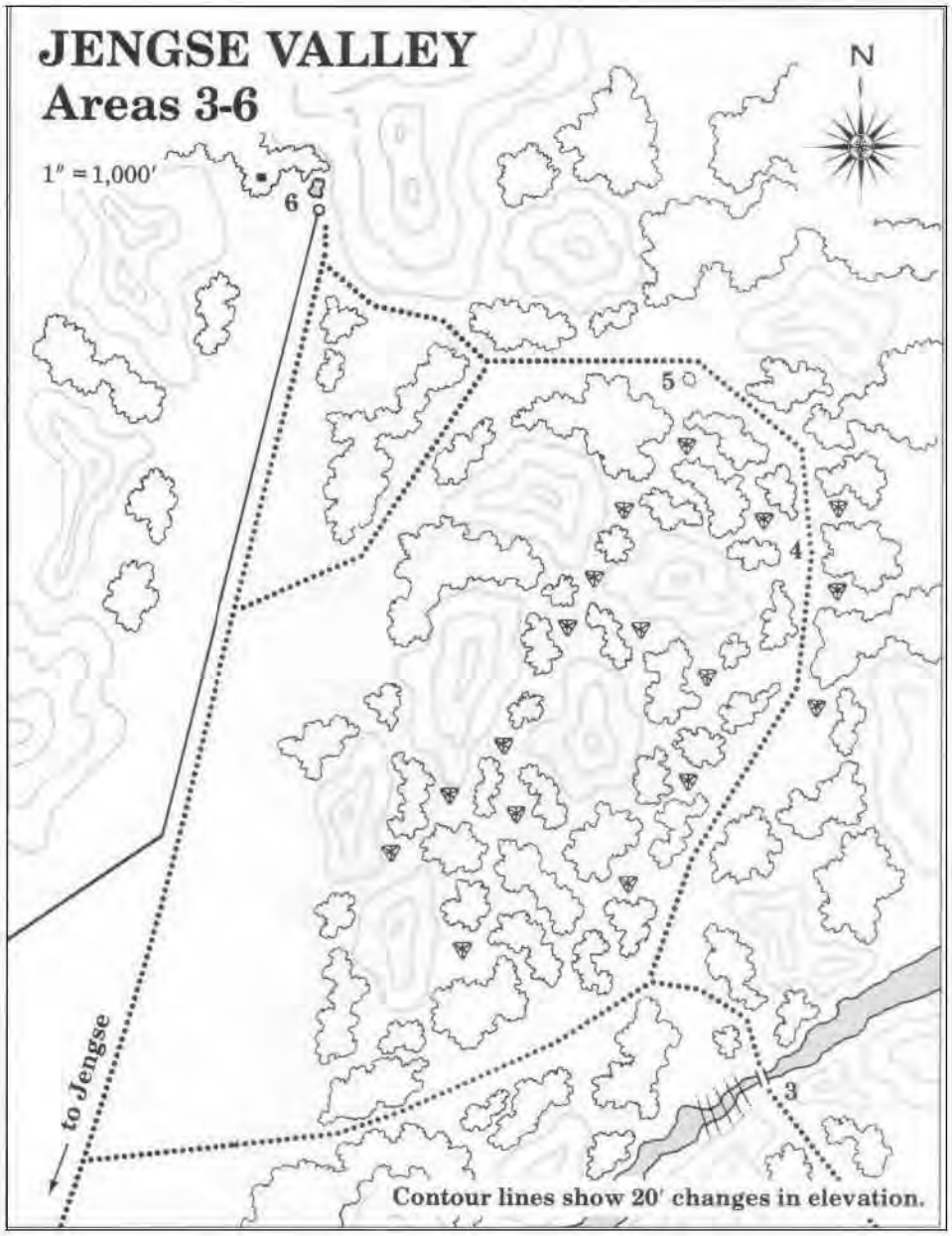
If there are enough survivors in the party, Tehwa may order two archers to cover the crossing. If possible, he will order one of his guards or a PC to precede him across the bridge.

The moment the first person reaches the north side of the bridge, the group is attacked by keches who are hiding in the trees and among the bushes on the north side of the gorge. The keches have deliberately waited until the party is as vulnerable as possible before showing themselves. The keches have been sent to guard the bridge by O-me-sa (who has enlisted them with bribes and cowed them with threats), and it won't occur to them to cross the gorge to get at the PCs, or to destroy the bridge. If the PCs can kill 50% of the keches, the remainder withdraw and let them pass.

Meng, however, will attempt to cut the bridge in order to trap the party against the gorge when Yu Po's assassins arrive. If challenged, he'll give the feeble excuse that he's trying to save everyone from the keches. The DM should play this as an opportunity for the PCs to become suspicious of Meng and perhaps even to guess that Meng is a traitor. If Meng has already begun to "look over his shoulder" (see "The Pursuit"), the PCs may even guess that a new enemy is coming up behind them. However, it's possible that Meng can persuade the PCs that he's just inexperienced in this kind of combat, and the episode will pass. If the PCs are alert, they can stop him before much damage is done. If the bridge is destroyed, the sheer sides of the gorge prevent the PCs from climbing down one side and up the other.

Approximately 500′ southwest of the bridge are six great cables that the keches have woven from forest vines and stretched across the gorge for their own use. These are visible if the PCs climb the hill south of the bridge. If the PCs attempt to cross the gorge on these cables, the keches will fight them desperately (unless they have already suffered 50% or greater losses) but will not attempt to cut the cables (which are important to them and were difficult to make).

Getting Kui-lo across the gorge by this route presents a problem, though, since she's terrified of heights. The PCs will have to show some imagination here, since Mah Tehwa will not allow her to be left behind. One way to get her across is to blindfold her, then tie her to the back of the strongest man present and let him take her across.



The distance to the bottom of the gorge is 60′. Anyone falling into the gorge suffers 6d6 hp damage from the fall (see the *DMG*, page 72, for further details on falling damage). The gorge's bottom varies from hard rock to soft mud in the center (where a small stream trickles through), and the precise damage from a fall is left to the DM and should depend on the needs of his adventure. If the PCs have a rope, they can try to rescue a fallen companion. Without a rope, the walls in the immediate vicinity are unscalable, and the fallen PC will have to make his way downstream (northeast) until he finds a place where he can climb out (DM option).

Keches (15): Int avg; AL NE; AC 4; MV 15, 6 climbing; HD 5; #AT 3; Dmg 2-5/2-5/1-6; SA −5 to opponents' surprise rolls; SD camouflage (reduced chances to be tracked, 50% chance to move silently); SZ M; ML 12; XP 650; MC (GREYHAWK® supplement).

The Pursuit

Yu Po's assassins are following the PCs as rapidly as they can. Since Meng told Yu Po that Tehwa's destination is the village of Jengse, they know where Tehwa is going, so Meng didn't have to leave a trail for them to follow. However, if the DM wants the PCs to guess that trouble's coming from behind, he may have Meng start "looking over his shoulder" in anticipation of the assassins' arrival, beginning at the ruined temple (area 2). Since it took Yu Po some time to assemble his assassins and they were late in starting out, they should not catch up to the PCs until after the bridge is reached. Like the kenku, the assassins can be used to apply extra pressure on the PCs, at the DM's option. One possibility is to delay the arrival of the assassins until O-me-sa is caught. After destroying O-me-sa, the PCs must protect Tehwa and Su-liang from the assassins—and then have to face Tehwa himself! Under the right circumstances, this would make a very interesting climax.)

The assassins are a motley group, the best that Yu Po could call together at the spur of the moment. Their instructions are quite simple: Kill Tehwa and anyone with him (except Meng, of course).

Assassin captain: AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; Bus 3; hp 25; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA ki power (+2 levels) once per day for one turn; S 15, D 12, C 13, I 14, W 12, Ch 10; ML 14; XP 175; leather armor, shield; proficiencies: naginata, weaponsmith, armorer, bowyer. The assassin captain carries a katana, a short bow, 20 normal arrows, three daggers, two strings of fen (200 total), and a string of yuan (75).

Assassins (8): AL N; AC 7; MV 12; Bus 1; hp 4-7 each; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; statistics as for Akemu; ML 13; XP 65; proficiencies: naginata, weaponsmith, armorer, bowyer. Each assassin carries a naginata, a short bow, 20 arrows, 1-3 daggers, and 1-6 strings of 100 fen; each wears leather armor.

Horses, medium (9): Int animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 18; HD 2+2; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-3; SZ L; ML 5; MC.

4. Spider Webs.

> On the northern side of the gorge, the track forks again, one branch leading southwest and the other north. The hills around you are thickly wooded. Stretched between the trees, you can see great webs such as giant spiders might spin.
>
> Tehwa tells you: "We follow the northern track from here. And stay out of the trees!"

If the PCs walk between the trees, the spiders drop on them, attempting to seize the party as prey. As long as the PCs are on the track, the spiders won't attempt to attack them until they reach the spot marked "4" on the map, where webs bracket the trail. At this point, particularly aggressive spiders may attack the party from two or three directions simultaneously. This decision should be based on the present condition of the party and the degree of opposition they've faced so far. Particularly lucky PCs can expect to be tested at this point. If, however, the PCs have been hard pressed, the DM may prefer to let them pass without a spider attack.

Giant spiders (1d4+2): Int low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 3, web 12; HD 4+4; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA bitten victims save vs. poison or die; SZ L; ML 13; XP 650; MC.

The spiders' lairs are high in the trees, and the sticky webs guarding them are festooned with the bones of the spiders' victims. The treasure to be found in the spiders' lairs will vary, of course, but in each lair the PCs can expect to find 50-100 tael, two or three gems (valued at 10 to 100 ch'ien each), an art object such as a small silk painting or a brooch (worth 10-100 ch'ien), and a single magical item (perhaps a *dagger +1*, a *wakizashi +1*, or a *kimono of protection +1*—see *cloak of protection* in the *DMG*, page 164), all mixed in with a lot of useless junk. If more than one lair is raided, the DM should keep in mind that this is a relatively remote rural area, so few of the spiders will have accumulated a sizeable store of treasure.

5. Dwa's Tree.

> The track curves around to the west. About 2,500' beyond the fork, you come to a long, open clearing in the woods. A third of the way into the clearing is a single tree. Standing near the tree, looking due west, is a humanlike creature with clawed hands and the feet of a bird. No one else can be seen.
>
> Tehwa motions for everyone to be still and whispers:
>
> "Quiet, now. He's dangerous, and we must take him alive! Threaten to destroy the tree and he will surrender."

The creature is Dwa, a bajang, and this is his tree. Dwa's life force is tied to the tree, and if it is destroyed he will instantly die.

Tehwa is perfectly aware of who and what Dwa is. Dwa is the emissary that O-me-sa sent to get Su-liang. Originally, O-me-sa tried to bargain for Tehwa himself to deliver Su-liang here, but Tehwa refused. Dwa is here when the PCs arrive, but O-me-sa has already taken Su-liang away.

A threat to destroy his tree will easily force Dwa to betray O-me-sa's destination and his purpose in wanting Su-liang. The trick will be to take Dwa by surprise and to establish the threat as soon as possible. Tehwa's *ring of lightning* will be an excellent tool for this purpose, and Tehwa will use it to threaten Dwa if the PCs don't have an appropriate weapon of their own. (At this point, Tehwa won't care if Dwa reveals the whole truth to the PCs. Even without Dwa, very soon the adventurers will know too much to be allowed to live. The penalty for making a deal such as Tehwa made with O-me-sa is death by torture, and he will not risk any chance of betrayal.)

When the PCs arrive in the vicinity of his tree, Dwa's attention is fixed on the direction O-me-sa took Su-liang. He is also tired from the journey from Chunming today (he left Chunming well before dawn and pushed hard with Su-liang in order to get here quickly). He therefore has only a 10% chance of detecting the PCs before they get to his tree, or a 25% chance if the PCs make a lot of noise getting through the giant spiders (the DM should adjust these chances to suit the circumstances.)

Dwa (bajang, lesser spirit): Int high; AL CE; AC 2; MV 12; HD 6; hp 30; #AT 2; Dmg 1-4/1-4; SA spells, poison; MR 10%; SZ S; ML 12; XP 2,000; OA/116; spells: (three times/day) *curse, omen, divination, fate, ghost light, wind*

breath, steam breath, transfix; (once/day) *ancient curse.* Dwa can change shape at will to a small wildcat. Anyone struck by a bajang must save vs. poison or suffer −1 on all hit and saving rolls for 2-7 rounds (effect is cumulative).

What Dwa Says

In return for a promise not to destroy his tree, Dwa will tell the PCs everything he knows about O-me-sa, including as much as the DM wants to reveal concerning Tehwa's bargain with the hu hsien. (Dwa knows nothing about Kui-lo or how Tehwa intended to give her to O-me-sa in Su-liang's place. If the PCs get this information, it will have to be from Tehwa or Kui-lo.)

The PCs may interrupt the following dialog and question Dwa on their own. In this case, Dwa can answer the PCs directly.

"My master took Su-liang that way," Dwa tells you, pointing west through the trees, "to an ancient tomb. He doesn't want her for what you think."

Tehwa doesn't look surprised at this statement. He glances at you in a calculating way before he says:

"Why does he want her, then?"

Dwa answers, "The doc cu'o'c who protects Jengse village keeps a magical ring in an old tomb. A renegade wu jen made the ring centuries ago, to give the wearer immunity to any kind of electrical attack. The Emperor of Shou Lung, who feared the vengeance of the Thunder God if such a thing were perfected within his domain, had the wu jen assassinated. But the ring wasn't destroyed, and many years ago my master discovered its existence.

"My master is terrified of thunderstorms, because the Celestial Emperor often sends the Thunder God to punish hu hsiens for their wickedness. This ring would be an excellent defense, which is why my master wants it. But the doc cu'o'c's power comes from electrical force, so the doc cu'o'c won't let the ring go to anyone."

"You lie," Tehwa growls. "Everyone knows that a doc cu'o'c keeps its treasures on the Astral plane." He points his *ring of lightning* at the tree.

Frightened, Dwa answers quickly, "The ring's power is to dissipate electricity into the substance of this plane, so it can never be taken to another plane. I swear it!"

"Then why doesn't your master just call his kenku and keches and take the ring?" Tehwa demands.

"My master . . . is not brave," Dwa lifts his ugly head, "and he does not trust others like he trusts me. He does not want too many to know he wants the ring, for fear the Celestial Emperor will learn of it."

Tehwa shakes his head impatiently. "What has this to do with my daughter?"

Dwa answers, "My master, by diligent research, learned of a contact poison that will kill a doc cu'o'c. But it is a very difficult poison to use. Only human flesh makes it active. That is why my master made his bargain with you five years ago, to take your daughter. She is perfect for his plan: protected in a stable environment, beautiful, kind, and with a nurse who could be bribed. You do not know it, Tehwa-san, but for these five years that nurse has been feeding Su-liang magical herbs that create the poison within her system, feeding them to her very slowly so as not to harm her. By now her system is so filled with the poison, which is harmless to a human, that if the doc cu'o'c only touches Su-liang he will be paralyzed at once and will die within an hour if the antidote isn't used.

"My master will send Su-liang into the tomb after the ring. She will certainly obey him, for you have given her to him. If she can get the ring without attracting the doc cu'o'c's attention, well and good. If not, the doc cu'o'c won't hurt her because she is good. Since my master will threaten your life if she doesn't bring him the ring, she will persist and the doc cu'o'c will have to lay hands on her to turn her away. When the doc cu'o'c is dead, my master will dispose of Su-liang, too."

Tehwa is agitated by that threat. "Exactly where is the tomb?" he demands.

"Go west along the track," Dwa says, "and take the northern fork."

If any of the PCs asks about the antidote to the poison, Dwa tells them, much amused, "It is sake. Who would believe a hu hsien's weakness could save a doc cu'o'c?"

Tehwa tells you, "Follow the track, as he instructs." He motions you to go west and north, then says to Dwa, "Your tree is safe, but if you betray me you are doomed."

Tehwa waits until everyone has preceded him along the track, then follows. After a few yards, he abruptly turns and sends a bolt of lightning from his magical ring to destroy Dwa's tree. When the tree splits and falls, Dwa too falls dead.

If the PCs challenge Tehwa for this treacherous act, he tells them, "We don't need a foul creature like that waiting behind us. He might have followed to attack us, or he might have found a way to ambush us when we come back this way."

The Northern Fork

Soon after passing the fork in the track, you find the nature of the country has abruptly changed. The land is more "pacified" in appearance, as though you had crossed an actual border. No spider webs are visible on this side of that invisible border.

"The doc cu'o'c defends this area," Tehwa says.

When the track's northern fork comes out of the hills, you can see a pond and a cistern where the villagers of Jengse have improved and built up the natural spring. The aqueduct they've built over many centuries leads away to the south and west, taking the water to their fields. Beyond the cistern is an ancient tomb, almost hidden among trees and bushes.

Tehwa tells you, "My daughter Suliang has a magical bell, a family heirloom. I looked for it this morning and it was gone, so she must have taken it with her. She may know that it is a magical protection against spirits, but I have told no one that it requires command words to make it function. Now you must know, for this bell may save her. The command is 'House of Mah.' The bell will protect just two individuals. If the chance occurs, use the bell to protect Suliang. I worked for months to arrange her marriage. Save her! I charge you with that mission above all other purposes!"

If Kui-lo is still with the party, she should certainly hear this instruction.

6. The Ancient Tomb. By the time the PCs reach the ancient tomb, O-me-sa's plan has already worked. Su-liang, sent to the tomb to get the ring, was stopped by the doc cu'o'c. When the doc cu'o'c touched her to turn her back, the poison paralyzed him. Su-liang, stunned and under great stress, dropped to her knees in tears, and O-me-sa went past her to enter the tomb and retrieve the ring. This happens just minutes before the arrival of the PCs, so that O-me-sa is still in the innermost chamber of the ancient tomb. Su-liang and the fallen doc cu'o'c are just outside the southern entrance to the tomb. The tomb itself is empty of all items other than the ring, having been thoroughly looted in the centuries since its construction.

O-me-sa, however, did not come here alone with Su-liang. He is accompanied by his bodyguards, four giant wolf spiders who stand guard at the four corners of the tomb, hidden among the trees and bushes (the DM should arrange the precise placement according to how the PCs decide to approach the tomb).

O-me-sa controls these spiders with his *ring of spider control.* The spiders try to prevent anyone from entering the tomb, and attack on O-me-sa's command. At the DM's discretion, some of the kenku may also have followed the PCs this far and will attack to support O-me-sa, their erstwhile master. The DM should use as many kenku as the situation requires, while still giving the PCs a fair chance of victory.

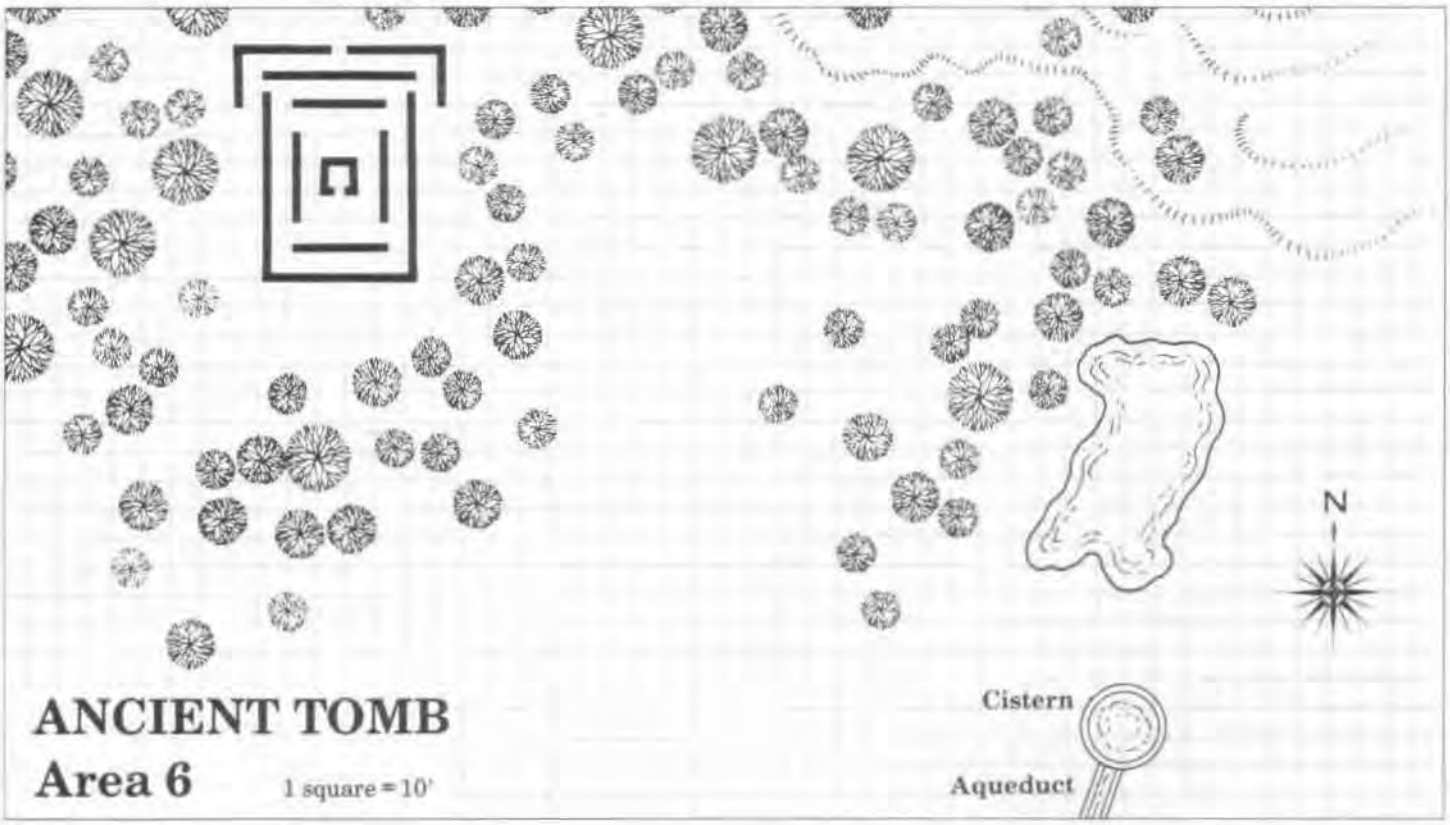
Tehwa will be in a rush to get to the tomb and rescue Su-liang before O-me-sa kills her. He won't have much patience with any attempt at stealth by the PCs. Tehwa is also painfully aware that once O-me-sa has the *ring of protection from electricity,* he will be immune to the *ring of lightning,* so Tehwa hopes to arrive before that happens. Once Tehwa has Suliang, he will withdraw immediately, having no further concern about the doc cu'o'c or O-me-sa's new ring. Su-liang, however, will want to do something to help the doc cu'o'c, since she has a sense of responsibility for his fate. If he is revived, she will take great care not to touch him again.

O-me-sa, once he has the *ring of protection from electricity,* will be determined to destroy Tehwa, Su-liang, and anyone else who could possibly let the Celestial Bureaucracy know that he has the ring. He will not rest until all witnesses are dead, and he is willing to expend all of his spiders (and kenku, if any are present) to that end. However, he will not show himself to the PCs in his human form. If the fight goes against him, he can retreat, to return later as a human and claim to be one of the villagers who's been caught in the fighting. Obviously, this trick will fool neither Tehwa nor Su-liang, but it might work against the PCs.

If Kui-lo is still with the party, she will concentrate on finding a way to give Suliang the code word for the small bell, hoping to use the magic to save her friend.

O-me-sa (hu hsien, lesser spirit): Int genius; AL CE; AC 7; MV 15; HD 6; hp 40; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 or by weapon type; SA drains life force from fascinated victims (one experience level/day); SD +3 or better weapon to hit, heals 2 hp/hour, immune to fire, half damage from cold attacks (saving throw applicable); MR 50%; SZ M; ML 14; XP 4,000; OA/122.

O-me-sa's true form is that of a fox, but he is one of those rare hu hsien whose second form is an attractive teenage boy (Ch 18, Co 25) rather than a human maiden. Even in human form he retains his tail. He can use the following spells: (at will, once/round) *become invisible, polymorph self, disguise, chameleon, know history, hypnotism, read magic, comprehend languages, ventriloquism, apparition, ESP, hypnotic pattern;* (once/day) *possess, servant horde, major creation;* (three times/week) *reward* or *ancient curse.* When in human form, the hu hsien's 25 comeliness gives him the power of *fascination.* O-me-sa's weaknesses include suffering double damage from electrical-based attacks, greatly fearing thunderstorms, an inability to resist wine, and reversion to fox form when intoxicated. He has a *ring of spider control* (see *ring of mammal control* in the *DMG,* page 148, for basic effects). He also has three vials containing potions of *evil dragon control, tengu control,* and *vitality.*



ANCIENT TOMB
Area 6
1 square = 10'

Su-liang doesn't know that more than one magical ring will cancel each other if worn, but she does know that O-me-sa will instantly put on any magical ring that comes into his possession, since the hu hsien immediately examined her three rings (but not her bell) when Dwa brought her to him. If the DM decides it's necessary, she can give this information to the PCs when she has a chance.

Su-liang (human): AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level; hp 5; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 17, C 14, I 15, W 10, Ch 16; ML 9; three gold rings (200, 150, 100 tael), pearl earrings (worth 250 tael each), two bracelets (worth 20 tael each), stiletto in a small sheath inside her left sleeve. She is dressed in bridal silks. Su-liang's heirloom is a palm-sized, hand-held *bell of protection (OA,* page 134), a smaller version of the large type of bell. This bell creates a barrier sufficient to protect only two persons, and the magic works only when the command word is spoken (not just when the bell is sounded). Su-liang doesn't know the command words.

Huge spiders (4): Int animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 18; HD 2+2; hp 18, 15, 12, 10; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA 30' leap, poison, surprise; SZ M; ML 8; XP 270; MC.

Doc cu'o'c: Int genius; AL CG; AC −3; MV 24; HD 10; 75 hp; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1-8/1-8 plus special; SA axe, spells; SD hit only by +3 or greater weapons; MR 70%; SZ M; ML 15; MC (Kara-Tur appendix); spells: (once/day) *cure diseases, remove paralysis, cure blindness, oath, remove curse;* (three times/day) *control weather, become astral;* (at will) *become invisible, detect invisibility.*

The doc cu'o'c normally appears as half a man standing on one leg and carrying an axe in his one hand (he's collapsed and has dropped his weapon at the moment). He can see invisible objects and spirits at all times. The axe inflicts electrical damage equal to the doc cu'o'c's current hit points when it strikes; a successful save vs. spells reduces the damage by half. The poisoned doc cu'o'c will die five turns and five rounds after the PCs arrive at the tomb, unless he is revived with a drink of sake; if the sake is administered, he will be restored to full power in 1-6 rounds.

The *ring of protection from electricity* that O-me-sa wants has the power to make the wearer immune to all electrical attacks (of any kind) and all associated effects. When the PCs arrive at the tomb, O-me-sa is in the tomb's innermost chamber and already has the ring.

The Final Danger

If the PCs succeed in destroying O-me-sa and his spiders (and kenku), and if Yu Po's assassins haven't yet appeared, now would be a good time for them to arrive. If the PCs have taken considerable damage, they may be hard put to stop the assassins. If the doc cu'o'c has been revived, however, he will willingly aid them. See "The Pursuit" for assassin statistics.

Once all other dangers are dealt with, the PCs face a final danger from Mah Tehwa, who will attempt to kill them in order to silence their knowledge of his bargain with O-me-sa. If any of Tehwa's guards are left, they will help him. In this situation, the doc cu'o'c will protect whoever gave him the sake but otherwise will stand aloof from "human affairs."

Concluding the Adventure

Once O-me-sa and Mah Tehwa are dead, the revived doc cu'o'c will first restore the *ring of protection from electricity* to the tomb, then offer the PCs rewards from his lair on the Astral plane: a vial of potion for each of them (roll on Table 89, *DMG* page 135). The doc cu'o'c knows with perfect accuracy what each potion does and will tell the PCs. If a harmful potion is rolled (poison, for example), roll again until a beneficial potion is obtained. The doc cu'o'c will also instruct the PCs on how Su-liang (if she has survived) can be purged of the poison in her system, a long and tedious process requiring 12 successive doses of potions of *extra healing*, given at one-week intervals. The doc cu'o'c will not be concerned with any other magical items the PCs may have won, only with the *ring of protection from electricity*.

If any of the PCs have survived, it can be presumed that Mah Tehwa is dead, since he will not stop attacking them until he is killed. Therefore, if Su-liang has survived, the time limit of returning her to Chunming before the next night no longer applies, but the PCs will still be honor bound to see her (and Kui-lo, if she survives) returned safely, since that was their original contract. When they return the two girls to the Mah house, Tehwa's surviving relatives will take custody of them. Su-liang's marriage to Prince Wan is out of the question now that Tehwa's connection to O-me-sa is revealed, but Tehwa's relatives will be just as happy that the dictatorial Tehwa is dead and will reward the PCs in accordance with what they were promised (even if they are "late" getting Su-liang back). Any bonuses Tehwa or Meng promised them will be paid, but the *ring of lightning*, the *bracers of defense AC 5*, Tehwa's wakizashi, and the *bell of protection* will have to be properly returned. If the PCs foolishly left any of these in the Jengse Valley, they'll have to go back and get them.

If Tehwa survives and is subdued—an extremely unlikely event—he should be returned to Chunming and turned over to the nearest provincial magistrates for punishment, for having had dealings with O-me-sa. If this is done, his relatives will consider him as good as dead and will reward the PCs as described previously, expressing disgust at Tehwa's perfidy.

It is possible (though unlikely) that Meng will survive the adventure. His survival, however, is immaterial to the conclusion of the adventure, since his orders from Yu Po concern only Tehwa and not the PCs or Su-liang. As mentioned before, the survival of Tehwa and the survival of the PCs are mutually exclusive. If Tehwa survives he will kill Meng, either because Meng knows too much or because it's obvious that he's a traitor. If the PCs survive, Meng will have no reason to oppose them (although *they* may have a harsh word to say to *him*).

If Su-liang dies, no matter how the rest of the adventure turns out, the PCs will get no reward from Tehwa or anyone else. Ω

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THE SCHOOL OF NEKROS

BY LISA SMEDMAN

The students are dying to study here.

Artwork by Ruth Thompson

Lisa has been playing the AD&D® game for nine years, and her gaming articles have appeared in DRAGON® Magazine. She is an editor and journalist who organizes science-fiction conventions in her spare time. Lisa offers us an adventure that is a blend of horror and humor and gives as her excuse: "I like to have pun with words."

"The School of Nekros" uses the AD&D® 2nd Edition rules and is designed for 4-6 characters of levels 6-12 (about 45 total levels). Ideally, the party should include a thief, a priest with anti-poison capabilities, elven characters (for their immunities to paralysis), and wizards, preferably of the illusion/phantasm or enchantment/charm magic schools, which are opposed to the necromancy school of magic.

Alternatively, the DM might like to run a high-level thief through this module as a solo adventure solely for personal gain. If so, the encounter with the NPC student in "The Graveyard" should definitely occur, giving the thief an opportunity to gain information to help him pass for one of the students at the school.

Many of the student necromancers at the School of Necros enjoy using the *cantrip* spell in ways that suit their individual personalities. To preserve this flavor, the names of these favorite *cantrip* effects, as given in *Unearthed Arcana*, have been included for each student. The spell *cantrip*, however, is treated as a first-level spell with variable effects, as per the AD&D 2nd Edition rules.

For the Player Characters

Something is rotten in the Shire of Denmock—and it's starting to smell.

The first halflings to get a whiff of the trouble lived in the village of Willow Whisp (named for the fireflies that flicker in the willows at the edge of the River Sticks). From these willow branches (the "sticks" that give the river its name), the halflings of Willow Whisp weave the baskets that constitute the bulk of their trade with the "big folks."

About a year ago, strange things started happening to the Sticks River, which flows past Willow Whisp and on through the length of the Shire of Denmock. One morning, the halflings woke to find a dark muddy stripe down the

middle of their river. After a time, however, they paid it no heed, thinking the river had merely acquired silt from heavy rains upstream.

But a few months ago, bits of rotten meat began appearing in the river. In a matter of days, the river water acquired a strange taint. The prudent began to boil their water before drinking it.

Just three weeks ago, a strange-looking carcass was found stuck in the mill wheel of Willow Whisp. The wheel had crushed much of the corpse, and decomposition had already set in. But the halflings could see that the body, although it appeared human, had the head of a dog, the feathers of a bird, and the tail of a reptile.

Day by day the problem only grew. Strangely twisted skeletons, some with chunks of rotting flesh still clinging to their bones, washed up on the banks of the river. Occasionally, an intact corpse could be seen floating downstream (none of the halflings were brave enough to pull these to shore). The River Sticks, once clear and clean, came to be called the "River Stinks."

Five days ago, a band of the bravest halflings returned from a journey upstream into the wild lands. They had reached the source of the River Sticks, a mighty waterfall that pours out of a cave halfway up the steep escarpment that marks the edge of the shire. After a difficult journey along a narrow path to the top of the cliff, the halflings came upon an overgrown open space that appeared to have once been a burial ground of the big folk. But the headstones were tumbled over, graves were disturbed, and the forest beyond seemed dark and menacing.

Just as the halflings were working up their courage to see if any of the contents of the graves had somehow gotten into the river, huge black birds loomed out of the sky, swooping down upon them. The frightened halflings turned and fled in a mad scramble down the cliff face.

Now the halfling explorers have returned to Willow Whisp with their tale of eerie graveyards and horrible black birds. The halfling villagers—none of them true adventurers—have put out an appeal far and wide for heroes to find and eliminate the source of the pollution of the river, which now is beginning to waft its foul odors throughout the length of the Shire of Denmock. Worst of all, the willow trees at the edge of the river are dying, and the basket-weaving business seems doomed. Demoralized, many of the halflings in Willow Whisp are packing their belongings, boarding up their homes, and preparing to set out for cleaner ground.

You have answered the call for heroes. The halflings don't have much to offer in return for this service and are hoping that you have come to their aid for altruistic motives. For it is clear that something must be done or the village will become a ghost town, and the once prosperous halflings will become impoverished refugees. What little the remaining halflings can offer, however, they have posted as a reward: title to a small plot of land in the village, and a guarantee of aid and welcome wherever halfling folk are to be found. The people of Willow Whisp only hope these are incentive enough.

For the Dungeon Master

The problem faced by the halflings is indeed originating from the area of the ancient graveyard. But the problem lies much deeper than the graves' moldering occupants.

Unbeknownst to the halflings downstream, a pair of powerful, evil wizards named Morphias and Mephista, who specialize in necromancy, have relocated their school of the arcane arts to a site directly under the graveyard. They were drawn to the site when they learned years ago from grave robbers that the skeleton of a very special ancient red dragon lay buried there, far below the human graveyard.

The wizards have smoothed down and finished off some upper caverns once hollowed out by the river, furnishing them as classrooms and residential quarters. In the course of constructing their new academy with *dig* and *transmute rock to mud* spells, the necromancers dumped earth into the underground channels of the River Sticks (causing the brown muddy stripe in the river). Now, the necromancers use the river as a natural disposal system for the carcasses that are the by-products of their students' experiments in magic.

The School of Nekros, as the necromancers call their academy, was relocated to this area because this is the home of the red dragon Flagros. Once a normal living creature, today she rests in her lair, alive but in a living skeletal form, incapable of casting magic but with powerful secrets locked in her skull, awaiting the day she can return to a normal existence.

Centuries ago, Flagros was the victim of one of her own spells, a reversed *air to flesh* spell (see sidebar, page 56) that she had taught to an ungrateful wizard. Still an animate, living creature, the now-skeletal dragon at first terrorized innocent people in the surrounding countryside but soon learned how vulnerable she was without flight, spells, or breath weapons to protect her. After a humiliating defeat in which a party of adventurers almost killed her, Flagros crept off to her cavern; a rock slide eventually sealed the entrance. She has been in a sulk ever since.

While Flagros has retained her exceptional intelligence even while skeletal, she is unable to cast spells on her own. Like any other creature affected by a reversed *air to flesh* spell, she can still think, but the special portion of the brain that allows a being to cast magical spells is missing while she is in living skeletal form. Also missing are the dragon's vocal cords and the fleshy structures (such as lungs and wing membranes) with which she could produce her breath weapon and with which she could fly. While she can still move and can magically see and hear, she is thus mute—both in terms of speech and spell-casting.

The wizards hope to learn the spells this dragon once knew, many of which were lost to humans over the intervening centuries since Flagros's disappearance. Both Morphias and Mephista are in communication with Flagros, who scratches the words and instructions for her spells with a skeletal claw in the hard floor of her chamber.

In return for learning her spells, the two deans of the School of Nekros have signed a pact with Flagros (a pact that Morphias, at least, will honor unto death) to reclothe her in flesh, using the ancient dragon's own powerful spells. Little do they realize that Flagros is so bitter toward humans that she will go on a killing spree once restored—and that her first victim will be the nearest wizard!

The resolution of the halflings' problems lies in the destruction of the evil school and of Flagros herself. While she cannot be turned (because she is not truly undead), the skeletal Flagros will, if the situation looks bad enough for

Spells of the School of Nekros

The School of Nekros specializes in teaching spells that have a dualistic nature; it teaches both the power to preserve and restore life—and to take it away.

The specialty spells taught at the School of Nekros (drawn from the AD&D 2nd Edition *Players Manual*) include:

First level: *cantrip, chill touch, detect undead*
Second level: *spectral hand*
Third level: *feign death, hold undead, vampiric touch*
Fourth level: *contagion, enervation*
Fifth level: *animate dead, magic jar, summon shadow*
Sixth level: *death spell, reincarnation*
Seventh level: *control undead, finger of death*
Eighth level: *clone*
Ninth level: *energy drain*

Additional necromancer spells from DRAGON® Magazine ("Arcane Lore," issue #148, and "The Savant," issue #140) include:
Fourth level: *empath* (#148), *life force transfer* (#148)
Fifth level: *life steal* (#140)
Sixth level: *vampire dagger* (#148)
Eighth level: *exchange* (#148)

New spells developed for this module include:
Second level: *see through other eyes*
Fourth level: *brainkill, air to flesh* (reversible)

All of the students encountered in the School of Nekros are specialist wizards. As such, they are opposed to the magic schools of enchantment/charm and illusion/phantasm. When a necromancer is casting spells within his specialty, victims must save at a −1 penalty. And when the specialists at the School of Nekros save against necromancy spells, they do so with a +1 bonus.

See Through Other Eyes (Divination)

Level: 2
Range: 90 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round/level of caster
Casting time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature per probe
Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, a wizard can look through the eyes of any living creature within range. If the wizard knows a specific creature or person is within range, the spell can be made to take effect upon that specific creature. Otherwise, the wizard will find himself looking through the eyes of any creature within range, determined randomly.

The creature thus affected will experience nothing to indicate that a spell is acting upon it and will remain in control of is own actions. (In other words, the wizard cannot force the subject to look at something, and takes a chance as to what he will see.) Looking through another's eyes gives the wizard all of the visual capabilities of that creature (e.g., infravision).

Brainkill (Necromancy)

Level: 4
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Neg.

A wizard using this spell, which operates much like a *forget* spell, can permanently burn from the memory of any one creature all knowledge of either a specific place or person, or a time period of up to one year (the spellcaster chooses the deserved result). The spell works on any intelligent creature by destroying a portion of its brain if it fails a saving throw vs. death magic, leaving it with selected gaps in memory. For example, a person thus affected might be completely unable to remember details of a place; the name, appearance, or any traits of a person; or might have a one-year blank in his memory. This lost knowledge can never be regained except by a *wish*.

Air to Flesh (Necromancy) (reversible)

Level: 4 Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5 rounds per each original hit dice of creature to be made/unmade skeletal
Area of Effect: 1 living (not undead) creature
Saving Throw: None

With this spell, a wizard can clothe in flesh (a term that includes muscles, inner organs, brain tissue, etc.) any one being turned into a "living skeleton" by the reverse of this spell, restoring the body to its original appearance and abilities (dead skeletons simply turn into dead bodies). The spell may also be reversed, to vaporize the flesh from any one living creature, leaving it an animated special skeleton as described in area 1A and area 5 (see "living skeletons"). As an animated skeleton, the individual thus affected can be controlled as per an undead creature, but since he is not truly undead he cannot be turned. These living skeletons can magically see and hear but cannot talk or cast spells.

The effects of this spell may be negated by casting first a *remove curse* spell and then a *dispel magic* spell. No system-shock roll is required.

her, turn and claw her way up and out of her cavern to the surface, destroying much of the magic school above in the process (see area 11 for details). She will then flee the area entirely for distant (and safer) lands.

A School for Necromancers

The School of Nekros caters to predominately evil wizards of all alignments; lawful, neutral, and chaotic characters exist in an uneasy alliance under one roof. Some of these are novice students, and some are more experienced practitioners of the magical arts. All have different motivations for studying the "dark arts of the dead." Some would use this power to wither the living and to raise the dead to do their bidding. Others would use their powers to restore life—for a hefty fee, of course. All are eager to study the ancient, newly rediscovered spells that can be learned only at this academy (see sidebar).

The deans of the school are the twins Morphias and Mephista. Born under a perfect half moon on the fall equinox, one is dark skinned and one is fair, two halves of a whole.

Morphias, a lawful-evil wizard, is dark both in complexion and in his temperament. He will stand by any oath, especially that made to Flagros (whom he trusts) but is brooding because he fears that his sister, a neutral-evil wizard, may break her oath. Like a sky filled with dark storm clouds, Morphias is quick to anger; only his lawful oaths keep his temper in check.

Mephista has pale white skin set off by raven-black hair, and she is said to shun the light of day. Like the moon, she is cool and aloof. Of neutral-evil alignment, she regards her brother's outbursts with contempt and would not be averse to opposing him—for his own good, of course. But deep down, she loves her brother and would never do anything to seriously harm him.

Both twins appear eternally young and have been *resurrected* many times on earlier adventures. Some of their students believe the pair to be vampires, but in fact they are ordinary mortals. (The PCs, however, can be led to believe the vampire story.)

Their servant (a permanent resident of the school) is Meresger, an older-appearing woman who wears her graying hair pulled back in a bun under a black lace net. Meresger speaks only when absolutely necessary and loves keeping poisonous creatures as pets. Aware that Morphias or Mephista will always restore her to life (should her magical items fail to save her from the venom of her pets), she uses these creatures as weapons against those in the outside world who would do her ill.

A lawful-evil wizard in training, Meresger is devoted to the twins and acts as a mother to them, their parents having long since died. Always guarding their safety, she is quick to act against anyone whom she thinks poses a threat to the twins. They are, after all, her "fountain of youth," and she is getting on in years.

Initiates to the School of Nekros must undergo a terrifying test (held in area 4) before becoming students of the dark arts. Before their studies can begin, they must prove their trust (and loyalty) by allowing a master of necromancy to kill them—and then restore them to life through *raise dead* spells, cast from a *ring of spell storing*. The ring is charged by a 15th-level priest from the sphere of necromancy who lives in a distant city; he casts spells into the ring in exchange for treasure and spells from the twins. (His statistics may be invented by the DM as necessary.) Students must make the usual resurrection survival rolls. Those who fail their rolls are forever dead (they are deemed "unworthy"), and their bodies are disposed of.

This ritual is an integral part of the school; the blood collected is used in further magic working, and the ritual itself is a ceremonial occasion. At the ritual's successful conclusion, the student is given a new name and begins training.

Once accepted by the academy, students wear hooded robes of black velvet. Each student is also given a silver-plated bone ring with a skull's head set with diamond chip eyes. This must be worn on the little finger of the left hand. The inside of the band of these rings bears the inscription: "Death above all."

These *rings of Nekros* give a +5 to saving throws vs. poison when worn. They also have the same effect as a permanent *control undead* (7th-level) wizard spell and are useful in controlling the special skeletons found in this adventure.

Wearing the silver skull rings, however, is mildly painful. On the inside of each ring are tiny barbs that draw a drop of blood as the ring is pushed onto a finger. This effect allows the anti-poison properties of the ring to directly interact with the bloodstream. While harmless in itself, the prick of the rings and the drop of blood may trick PCs into thinking twice before wearing these potentially helpful rings.

Morphias and Mephista can easily identify true students of the School of Nekros by means of an invisible mark on the palm of each student's left hand. This black half moon (put there by the second-level wizard spell *wizard mark* upon acceptance by the school) will be readily observable through a *detect magic* spell. Should outsiders try to disguise themselves as students, this mark serves as a litmus test for their authenticity.

Journey to the School

The DM should roll twice per day and once per night for random encounters between the halfling town and the graveyard, using tables for inhabited forest areas.

The Cliff Face

After a three-day journey upriver, the PCs reach the 200'-high escarpment that marks the edge of the Shire of Denmock and the beginning of the wild lands above. The River Sticks pours forth in a cascade from about 100' up the cliff face, surging out of a narrow cave. About 30' to the right of the cave mouth is the closest approach of a path that switchbacks up the cliff face. The climb up the path to the heights above appears to be a relatively easy one, although the slopes beside the trail look unsafe.

Attempting to cross from the path to the cave mouth requires mountaineering skills. There is no clear trail, and the rock face is crumbling. Should the PCs gain access to the cave mouth, they find inside it a narrow and very slippery ledge just above the surface of the rushing water. It is possible to follow this ledge back to a point under the disposal pit used by the academy, but a slip and plunge into the river results in a PC being hurled down the waterfall for 10d6 hp damage on the rocks below. (A slip off the ledge occurs unless a PC makes a dexterity check on 1d20.)

Those who make it to the farthest reaches of the cave see a 60' high shaft leading upward, cut into the rough

stone face of the ceiling of the cave. Climbing up this 10'-wide shaft is possible with a dexterity check on 2d8, although the walls are slippery with mud and blood. The top of the shaft is sealed off by the trapdoor in area 1A. The trapdoor opens down into the shaft, and a spring device keeps it shut from below. (The trapdoor can be easily opened by making a strength check on 1d10.)

The Graveyard

> Reaching the top of the escarpment, you see before you the ancient graveyard. It is a chaotic mass of tumbled grave markers, partially excavated graves, twisted vines, and overgrown grass. The graves occupy a cleared area about 500' across, at the edge of which are the dark trees of a forest. At the far edge of the graveyard, a round metal pipe about 6" wide emits a plume of black smoke and an occasional spark. In front of the pipe and a bit to the left stands a square tomb, perhaps 20' × 20' in size, of white and pink marble, with a heavy door in one side. Once a gloriously carved repository for the dead, the tomb now is pitted with age.

The chimney from which the smoke is rising leads down into the kitchen of the academy (area 5). It is filled with hot, choking smoke.

While in the graveyard area, the PCs are attacked by 2-8 giant ravens. These birds try to drive intruders from the area but will not pursue once the PCs have climbed back down the cliff, nor will they fight to the death. These ravens, while they are sometimes used by the wizards, are not under their control. They are longtime inhabitants of the graveyard.

Giant ravens (2-8): Int low; AL N; AC 4; MV 3, fly 18; HD 3+2; hp 19 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 3-6; SA 10% chance victim loses eye in attack; SZ M-L (6'-10' wingspread); ML 10; XP 270; MM2.

There is also a 50% chance that the PCs will encounter an academy student who is returning to the graveyard along a path through the forest. This encounter would be a fortunate one, for it could allow the PCs to learn some of the secrets of the school before attempting to enter.

Proditor is a student at the School of Nekros. A small man with brilliant red hair and pale skin, he dresses in expensive, embroidered black clothes and wears lots of gold rings (2-8 rings, average value 50 gp each). He has a twitch in his left eye that causes him to appear as if he is winking at the party.

Proditor: AL CE; AC 10; MV 12; W2; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 10, D 12, C 12, I 16, W 16, Ch 14; ML 15; XP 175; *ring of Nekros,* dagger, belt, wineskin, six iron rations, 20 sp.

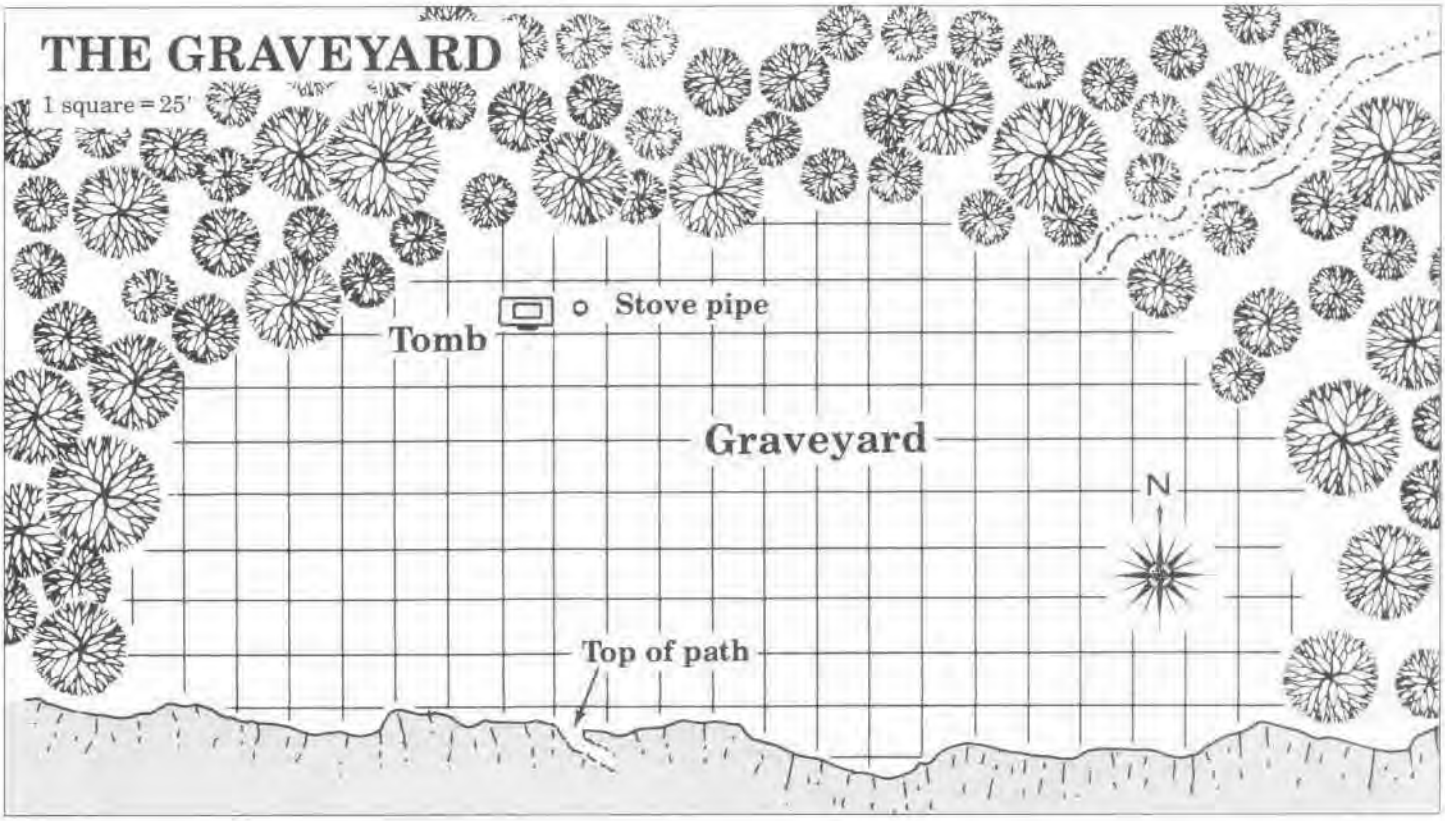
Proditor, a 2nd-level wizard specializing in necromancy, has memorized the following spells: *chill touch; protection from good* (which he casts upon himself if first alerted to the presence of the party); *burning hands* (which he will direct at the nearest threat if attacked, in an attempt to set clothing and hair afire).

Proditor has high aspirations. He wants Flagros, the skeletal dragon, all to himself and doesn't care whose downfall he causes to attain this goal. He will readily betray anyone, either the twins or the party, to gain sole possession of Flagros. But he will be careful not to let the party interfere with his goal by destroying the dragon. Instead, he will use them to weaken others at the school, sending the PCs in first and following at a safe distance, only to betray the party at its weakest moment.

If questioned, Proditor might tell strangers the proper combination needed to gain safe entrance to the School of Nekros (for details, see "Outside the Tomb"). He might also reveal information about the routines of the inhabitants of the School of Nekros if he feels this will further his aims.

It should be obvious from the school schedule (see sidebar, page 60) that the PCs will need some method of knowing what time it is—and a DM willing to keep careful track of time. Fortunately, all of the routines are announced by Meresger by the sound of a gong (the gong is located at the statue in area 2). Wake-up time is six gongs. Breakfast is a single gong, lunch is two gongs, and supper is three. The call to the lecture hall in the "13th hour" of the night is announced with 13 gongs.

The DM should take careful note of



the time the PCs enter the School of Nekros and the time that they enter each area. Adjust the descriptions in the adventure in the following ways as applicable: If it is just before or after a meal or lecture, students will be filing through the school's central hallway. If just after wake-up, they will be standing in line for the washroom (area 6). If it is mealtime, most of the students (2-12) will be gathered in the kitchen, and if a lecture is in progress, almost every student (3-12) will be in the lecture hall. Of course, there will always be a few students who don't feel like eating with the others or who are cutting class, just as there will always be a few suffering from insomnia or cramming for exams in the middle of the day when everyone else is asleep. Hence, the random encounter tables for the school itself.

Outside the Tomb

The door of the tomb is of bronze, green with age but still strong. It is locked with a keyhole in dead center. Above the door is the inscription "Eternal Rest." A braided, black silk rope hangs at one side of the door. Unlike the tomb itself, the rope is new.

The door has a normal lock. The three copies of the skull-headed key that opens this door are in the possession of Morphias, Mephista, and Meresger. Each takes the key when leaving the school.

The door is not trapped and can be unlocked from either side. Pulling the rope rings a bell down below in the school. Students identify themselves by a series of three rings, a pause, and three more rings. When this signal is heard below, one of the students is given a key and sent to open the door (roll on the Random Encounters chart to determine which student answers the door).

Strangers who do not know the code but ring the bell will instead be carefully scrutinized by Mephista (her statistics can be found at area 11), who *teleports* to the interior of the tomb and uses her *see through other eyes* spell (see sidebar for details) to look through the eyes of a raven and see who is at the door. If she sees hostile-looking strangers, she may marshal the forces of the School of Nekros to attack.

Inside the Tomb

The inside of the tomb is bare except for a small stone altar against the far wall, upon which three silver bowls rest. On ledges to either side of the door lie the moldering, almost skeletal remains of humans.

The necromancers have left the bodies of this husband and wife intact to preserve the original appearance of the tomb, which is actually the entrance to the School of Nekros. The dead are dressed in moldy clothing that crumbles when touched, and still have their original jewelry: gold wedding rings (worth 50 gp each) a silver pendant of a unicorn (50 gp value), and a plain gold bracelet (100 gp value). Unless it is daylight when the tomb is entered, the PCs will be attacked by two undead that rise up out of the bodies.

Wraiths (2): Int 11; AL LE; AC 4; MV 12, fly 24 (B); HD 5 +3; hp 28 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6; SA energy drain; SD silver or magical weapons to hit; SZ M; ML 15; XP 3,000; MC.

The students at the School of Nekros are usually able to control these wraiths (unless the wraiths make their saving throws) by use of the *rings of Nekros*. To

really play it safe, some students will pass through this area only by day.

The bowls (which have been glued by the necromancers to the altar so they do not spill when it is moved) contain the brown, crumbling remains of rose petals. Entrance to the School of Nekros is gained by pushing a hidden button at the base of the altar, which allows it to be easily slid to one side, revealing the flight of stairs below. A corresponding button is found in plain sight on the wall near the top of the stairs. Pushing this button causes the altar to slide back into place—or to slide open for those leaving the school.

The School of Nekros

1. False Hall of Skulls.

> At the bottom of the flight of stairs leading down from the tomb you see a long hallway, 10' wide and 130' long, with a door at the far end. On either side of the hallway, the walls are filled with long rows of wooden shelves that hold skulls of every shape and description. Every inch of shelf space is filled, and a small brass plaque is set on the shelf below each skull.
>
> Just beyond the bottom stair, facing you, is the gilded, life-sized statue of a woman in clinging robes. Her arms are raised as if to embrace, and on her head is a headdress in the shape of a scorpion. Carved letters mark the base of the statue.

Unless the PCs enter this area between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M., they will also see the following:

> At the far end of the hallway, a smallish, blonde man with a drooping moustache and wearing black robes is directing two skeletons who are carrying between them a vaguely humanoid corpse slung in a blanket. The skeletons wear sword belts with long swords strapped to their hips.

If the party has been relatively quiet, a roll of 1-2 on 1d6 indicates that this novice wizard is surprised. However, as soon as he has recovered, he sends the skeletons in to attack the party before either fleeing (if possible) or casting spells.

This black-robed figure is Timor, a student of the School of Nekros. Not a particularly brave person, he is often teased by other students and usually winds up with the dirty jobs like corpse disposal. (In this case, he is grumpy because one of his fellow students informed on him after he killed one of Meresger's pet spiders.) It is rumored that Timor panicked at his ritual killing when trying to gain entrance to the School of Nekros and thus was almost not accepted by the school.

When the party encounters him, Timor is in the act of directing the disposal of a very mangled, headless elven corpse, its body magicked into strange configurations. Timor knows the dangers of the trap at area 1A and will avoid it at all costs. He will attempt to fight his way back through the party so that he can alert the others in the school below. If this proves impossible, he will flee up the stairs to the surface, using his *ring of Nekros* to force the skeletons to attack. If all else fails and death appears certain, Timor will leap through the trapdoor at area 1A to take his chances in the river below.

Timor, student: AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; W1; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 9, D 10, C 13, I 16, W 16, Ch 8; ML 6; XP 120; *ring of Nekros, ring of protection* +2, dagger.

Timor, a 1st-level wizard specializing in necromancy, has the following spells memorized: *chill touch; hold portal* (which he will use to close behind him whatever door he flees through, either the secret door or the door of the tomb above).

The skeleton servants are a new type of monster: living skeletons. They were both once human fighters who have been transformed by a reversed *air to flesh* spell. They are used for much of the heavy work at the school.

Living skeletons (2): AL LN, N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3, 2; hp 19, 11; THAC0 17, 19; #AT 1 each; Dmg by weapon type (sword); S 17, 15; D 13, 12; C 15, 12; I 10, 3; W 12, 10; Ch 12, 9; SD cannot be turned; MR nil; SZ M; ML 14, 12; XP nil (not enemies); new.

If not controlled by Timor, these creatures will stop fighting and may even aid the party. (For a full description of the fate that has befallen these NPCs and their current abilities, see the *air to flesh* spell in the sidebar.)

The words at the base of the statue read: "Mighty Selket, protector of the dead." The statue is in fact just that—a stone statue covered with a very thin sheet of gold foil. But one round after PCs have set foot in the hallway at the base of the stairs (if Timor is not encountered here), a panel in the back of the base opens up to release four smallish giant scorpions.

Giant scorpions (1-4 babies): Int non; AL N; AC 3; MV 15; HD 3+2; hp 20 each; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-4; SA poison sting; SZ S (2' long); ML 15; XP 270; MC. Each of these creatures is about the size of a very small dog.

The scorpions will immediately attack. The only way to avoid this attack is by pulling the tail of the scorpion on the statue's head within one round of entering the hall—which Timor will already have done if he has been encountered here. This locks the scorpion-releasing mechanism (with a loud click) for two turns. Pulling the tail two or more times immediately releases 1-8 scorpions instead of 1-4.)

The brass plaques beneath each skull

Normal Schedule of the School of Nekros

Midnight-6:00 A.M. (13 gongs): Classes in session in lecture hall (area 4)
6:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.: Most students asleep in their rooms (area 9).
2:00 P.M.-2:30 P.M. (six gongs): Morning routines
2:30 P.M.-3:00 P.M. (one gong): Breakfast in kitchen (area 5)
7:00 P.M.-7:30 P.M. (two gongs): Lunch in kitchen (area 5)
1:00 A.M.-1:30 A.M. (three gongs): Dinner in kitchen (area 5)

Between the hours of 3:00 P.M. and midnight, students are spread throughout the academy in small groups, studying in the library (area 7), resting or writing spells into their spell books in their rooms (area 9), practicing the mixing of spell components in the laboratory (area 10), or having a quick snack in the kitchen (area 5). The adventure assumes that this is the time period in which the PCs are venturing through the school. If not, the DM should adjust the placement of students and staff to suit the time of day.

are engraved; each lists the name and race of the skull (e.g., "Thomas Trumpeter, Human"). The skulls themselves, however, are only plaster copies of the real thing. This hallway is, in fact, a lure for intruders. The real "library of skulls" lies below. There is nothing of value to be found by searching this hallway.

1A. Disposal Trap. At the far end of the hallway lies another trap. The door is real and is locked, but beyond it lies only a dead-end hallway lined with a series of false doors. The PCs are unlikely to learn this fact, however.

The final 10′ × 10′ section of the hallway is a trapdoor, used as a garbage-disposal system by the inhabitants of the School of Nekros. Hauling corpses and trash up here is one of the students' least desirable chores, one assigned as a punishment to those who cut classes, fall asleep during lectures, or otherwise disobey the rules of the academy.

When 10 lbs. or more of pressure is placed upon it, this trapdoor swings open to dump whatever it holds down a shaft that leads to the River Sticks. (Observant PCs may see a little dried blood on the trapdoor where corpses for disposal have landed.) Any PC falling through the trap must then (assuming he doesn't sink from the weight of his armor) swim and scramble to gain the slippery cave ledge before being swept out into the waterfall and over the cliff face for 10d6 hp damage on the rocks below. A PC can reach the ledge safely if a dexterity check is made on 1d20.

The students use this pit to dispose of the gory results of botched necromantic spells into the river below. And just in case anyone should try to gain entrance to the school by climbing up through the pit, there is an additional trap. Some 11′ from the false door (and 1′ west of the trapdoor itself) is a force field that affects living creatures as would a reversed *air to flesh* spell. Anyone passing west through the force field will turn into a living skeleton.

The transformation occurs as follows: All flesh is instantly vaporized, and the PC loses the ability to talk and cast spells. The PC, however, is still in full control of his actions and can think, see, and hear as before. He retains all equipment and can continue to play out the adventure.

The force field works only upon those traveling west along the hallway. It can neither reverse nor augment its own effects. To avoid it, students on disposal duty simply toss a corpse through the force field onto the trapdoor.

The force field's effects on creatures may be dispelled through the consecutive casting of *remove curse* and *dispel magic* spells. Otherwise, the effects are permanent until removed by an *air to flesh* spell. The force field itself may be removed by the casting of a *dispel magic* spell against 18th-level magic.

PCs affected by this trap who agree to faithfully serve the school for one year receive a promise that they will be reclothed in flesh by Morphias through the *air to flesh* spell. Until then, such characters are subject to control by anyone who wears one of the pinkie rings of the School of Nekros.

1B. Secret Doors. A secret door open onto a flight of stairs leading down. At the base of the stairs, another secret door leads to the real Hall of Skulls (area 2).

Once the PCs have entered the real Hall of Skulls at the bottom of the stairs, they are inside the School of Nekros. Check once each round for random encounters, unless it is between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M.—during which time the majority of the inhabitants are likely to be asleep. During these hours only, check for random encounters once each turn as per the Wandering Encounters chart.

2. The Hall of Skulls.

> You see a long hallway, 10′ wide and 130′ long, with a total of nine more doors along its walls. On either side of the hallway, the walls are filled with long rows of wooden shelves containing more skulls of every shape and description. Every inch of shelf space is filled, and a small brass plaque is set on the shelf below each skull. The shelves are interrupted at intervals by a series of wooden doors.
>
> At the eastern end of the hallway, facing you, is the gilded, life-sized statue of a woman in clinging robes. Her arms are raised as if to embrace, and from them hang a brass gong and a padded mallet. On the head of the statue is a headdress in the shape of a scorpion. Carved letters adorn the base of the statue.
>
> A bell hangs from the ceiling at the west end of the hallway, mounted a good 8′ above the floor and 20′ from the end wall.

This hallway is similar in appearance to the false hall of skulls (area 1), with the following changes: the statue of Selket does not release scorpions and is at a different place in the hall; the gong is engraved with the words "Awaken the Dead"; the skulls are real; there are more doors. The bell is activated manually by the black silk rope in the tomb above, and magically by the unauthorized opening of the secret back door of the wardrobe in area 3.

The hallway may contain wandering monsters (including students). The DM should roll to determine if anyone or any creature is present as soon as the PCs enter the hallway. Depending on the time of day, the hall may also contain students queued up at the door to the washroom (area 6) or rushing to or from a meal in the dining room (area 5) or a class in the lecture hall (area 4). (See Normal Schedule of the School of Nekros for details on daily routines.) Students immediately attack any obviously hostile intruders.

Even if a check on the Wandering Monster table produces no results, there is a further 20% chance (if it is between the hours of 2:00 P.M. and midnight) that 2-3 students (determine students at random from student wizards not yet encountered) are at the west end of the hall in front of the door to area 3, busy playing a game that has been forbidden by the deans of the school. On a roll of 1-2 on 1d6, the group is not immediately aware of the party and the PCs see the following:

> At the west end of the hallway, a group of humans in black robes is clustered in front of a door. As you watch, one peers through a peep hole in the door, then jumps back with a scream and nervous laughter. The others thump the person on the back and exchange coins.

For details on the game the students are playing, see the door peephole trap described in area 3.

These students attack and attempt to spread the alarm if the party is hostile. Otherwise, they approach with caution

while one runs off to find the deans or Meresger.

The shelves lining the walls of this hallway contain Morphias's and Mephista's private collection of skulls from around the world. There is at least one skull from just about every sentient humanoid race known, each neatly labelled with a bronze plaque on the shelf below. The skulls are consulted by the necromancers when they wish to gain information from the undead. They are animated through an *animate dead* spell, clothed in flesh with an *air to flesh* spell, and consulted by Mephista, who picks up their thoughts with her *ESP* spell. In effect, they constitute an undead "library" for the twins. There is a 10% chance that a skull may have accidentally been replaced on its shelf with flesh still intact by a careless student.

3. Bedroom of Morphias and Mephista. This room has a locked door with a tiny round peephole at about the right height for a human to look into. In addition to a normal, deadbolt lock, this door contains two traps. The first is a needle trap in the handle (save vs. paralysis at −4 penalty or suffer paralysis for 1-10 rounds). The second trap is found in the peephole itself.

Looking out through the peephole from the room is possible, but trying to look into the room has the following results: For the first 12 seconds, the person looking through the peephole sees an *illusion* of the thing he most fears. Then, in the 13th second, a jet of acid is emitted from the peephole, doing 1-4 hp damage and blinding one eye unless the person makes a save vs. poison, in which case the eye is merely weakened and vision goes blurry for a few moments. The blindness is permanent unless a *heal* spell is cast on the eye.

The students like to play with this peephole, to see if they have the stamina to look upon the things they most fear, and the timing and speed to pull away just before the jet of acid shoots out of the hole (this is the possible encounter mentioned in area 2).

Once the door is open, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> This 30' × 30' room is lit by a dim purple light that seems to come from everywhere and that casts weird shadows. The room contains two four-poster canopy beds, each with black velvet curtains pulled tight around it. A huge, ornately carved, inlaid wooden table is flanked by two chairs carved out of bone. Beside an hourglass filled with gold dust, a glowing white orb sheds light on the papers scattered across the table. A half-eaten apple sit nearby.
>
> The walls are draped with black velvet curtains showing embroidered and painted scenes of tombs, pyramids, and battlefields filled with corpses. On a dressing table beside the bed nearer the door sits a wooden head on which a black wig has been placed. Beside the wig are a brooch and earrings (150 gp value each). A wardrobe at the back of the room is slightly open; black robes hang in it.

If it is between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M., Morphias (if not already encountered elsewhere) is sleeping in the bed farther from the door. At any other time of day, he is sitting at the table reading. Morphias deals harshly with intruders and immediately attacks any who appear to be hostile.

If Morphias is awake and reading at the table, add the following:

> A young man of dark complexion and jet-black eyes is sitting at the far end of the long table, reading by the light of the orb. He is dressed in robes of black velvet embroidered with metallic purple dragons, and a tiny silver key hangs on a chain around his neck. He looks up as you enter, frowns when he realizes you are not students, and mutters a few quick words.

Morphias has no interest in talking to intruders. He will call for help and then try to immobilize the PCs for later interrogation by casting *magic missile* and *summon swarm* spells to keep the party busy while he casts a *time stop* spell.

Morphias, dean of the School of Nekros: AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; W18; hp 40; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 10, D 12, C 10, I 17; W 17; Ch 15; ML 16; XP 12,000; potion of *human control*, potion of *extra healing*,

Wandering Encounters

Roll (1d12)	Encounter	For stats see	Encountered yet? (check if yes)
1-2	living skeletons (1-2)	areas 1 & 5	____
3-4	poisonous spiders (1-4)	area 8	____
5-6	centipedes (1-4)	area 8	____
7-8	small scorpions (1-4)	area 8	____
9-10	poisonous snakes (1-4)	area 8	____
11	Roll percentage dice:		
	01-33% = Meresger	area 8	____
	34-66% = Morphias	area 3	____
	67-00% = Mephista	area 11	____
12	students (1-4). Roll 1d12 again to see which student(s) are encountered. Reroll if student(s) have already been encountered. Delete students encountered here from the rooms where they would otherwise be found.		

Roll (1d12)	Student	Normally found in	Sleeps in (if daytime)	Encountered yet? (check if yes)
1	Laridum	area 5	area 9A	____
2	Redux	area 5	area 9I	____
3	Feralis	area 10	area 9B	____
4	Vado	area 10	area 9E	____
5	Sicarius	area 6	area 9G	____
6	Carmen	area 7	area 9L	____
7	Malignus	area 7	area 9F	____
8	Timor	area 1	area 9J	____
9	Cadaver	area 9C	area 9C	____
10	Origo	area 9K	area 9K	____
11	Impavidus	area 9M	area 9M	____
12	Balatro	area 9M	area 9M	____

ring of regeneration, ring of protection +4, ring of Nekros, a skull-headed key (in his pocket) that unlocks the door of the tomb above (see "Outside the Tomb"), and a tiny silver key on a chain around his neck, which unlocks the chest in the laboratory (area 10).

Morphias, an 18th-level wizard specializing in necromancy spells, has the following spells memorized: *alarm, cantrip* (exterminate), *chill touch, detect magic, hold portal, magic missile, detect good, knock, spectral hand, stinking cloud, summon swarm, wizard lock, dispel magic, feign death, fireball, fly, lightning bolt, protection from good 10' radius, air to flesh, dig, dimension door, enervation, minor globe of invulnerability, wizard eye, animate dead, cloudkill, dismissal, fabricate, magic jar, transmute rock to mud, death fog, death spell, enchant an item, move earth, Bigby's grasping hand, control undead, power word stun, spell turning, clone, mind blank, permanency, energy drain, time stop.*

Seeking to preserve and protect his school, Morphias will not use his more destructive spells but will attempt to trap or kill hostile persons without destroying anything valuable. Given enough casting time, he will use his *time stop* spell to freeze the fighting and deal with the intruders on his own terms.

The items immediately visible in this room are all mundane ones except for the orb, which is simply a round white rock with a dimmer than usual *continual light* spell cast on it. The purple light filling the room can be eliminated by simply speaking the word "darkness" and can be restored by speaking the work "light." The command "brighter" increases the amount of purple light, while "dimmer" has the opposite effect.

Morphias and Mephista store their treasure and spell books behind the secret false back of the wardrobe. This back is easily removed once discovered, but anyone who does so without first pushing a secret button in the handle of the wardrobe's front door triggers a trap. With a slight hissing sound, this trap releases an odorless, colorless gas that puts everyone within 10' of the wardrobe to sleep (treat as a *sleep* spell) unless a saving throw vs. poison is made (at a −4 penalty). Simultaneously, the school's bell (unless already disabled) starts to ring an alarm.

Once the false back of the wardrobe is removed, read the following:

> Inside the secret compartment at the rear of the wardrobe you see a chest, a broom, and 18 books bound in dark purple leather. Moving gold letters flicker along the spines of the books, and on the spine of each book is a black half moon.

Unless this half moon mark is first touched by a person with the school's *wizard mark* on his palm, any of these magic texts inflicts increasing electrical damage per each six seconds touched or held (half damage if the handler is wearing stout leather gloves). The progression per six-second time period is:

First period	1d4 hp damage
Second period	1d6 hp damage
Third period	1d8 hp damage
Fourth period	1d10 hp damage
Fifth period	1d12 hp damage
Sixth period	1d20 hp damage

The progression continues for the seventh through 12th period with two dice of each type, then three dice of each type for the next six periods, etc.

Would-be thieves may not get this far, however. As soon as anyone attempts to touch or reach anything in the secret compartment of the wardrobe, he is attacked by special shadows summoned directly from the Negative Material plane. One to four of these shadows materialize for each person who reaches past the back panel of the wardrobe, and they materialize only the first time a person reaches in. The dim light in this room is designed to aid the shadows in their attacks. Morphias and Mephista control the shadows through their *control undead* spells.

Unlike regular shadows, which are humanoid shaped, these shadows are shaped like lions. Otherwise, they attack and move like regular shadows. They are summoned from the Negative Material plane when any object (e.g., an arm, a stick, a rope, etc.) forms a link between the interior of the wardrobe and the secret chamber beyond its back wall, and they emerge with a roar (otherwise being 90% undetectable). This one-way passage can be negated by a *dispel magic* spell.

Shadows: Int low; AL CE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 21 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-5; SA strength drain; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; immune to *sleep, charm,* and *hold* spells; MR special; SZ M; ML 18; XP 650; MC.

Inside the false back of the wardrobe are a *broom of flying* and the spell books of Morphias and Mephista. The chest contains 1,000 gp, 540 sp, 13 white chalcedony stones (worth 50 gp each) carved in the shape of skulls, a black scarab pin of carved jet that is actually a *scarab of death,* and a scarab pin set with a blue star sapphire that is actually a *scarab of protection.*

Finally, a secret trapdoor in the base of the wardrobe opens to reveal a narrow, winding flight of roughly cut steps that leads to the lair of the skeletal red dragon (area 11).

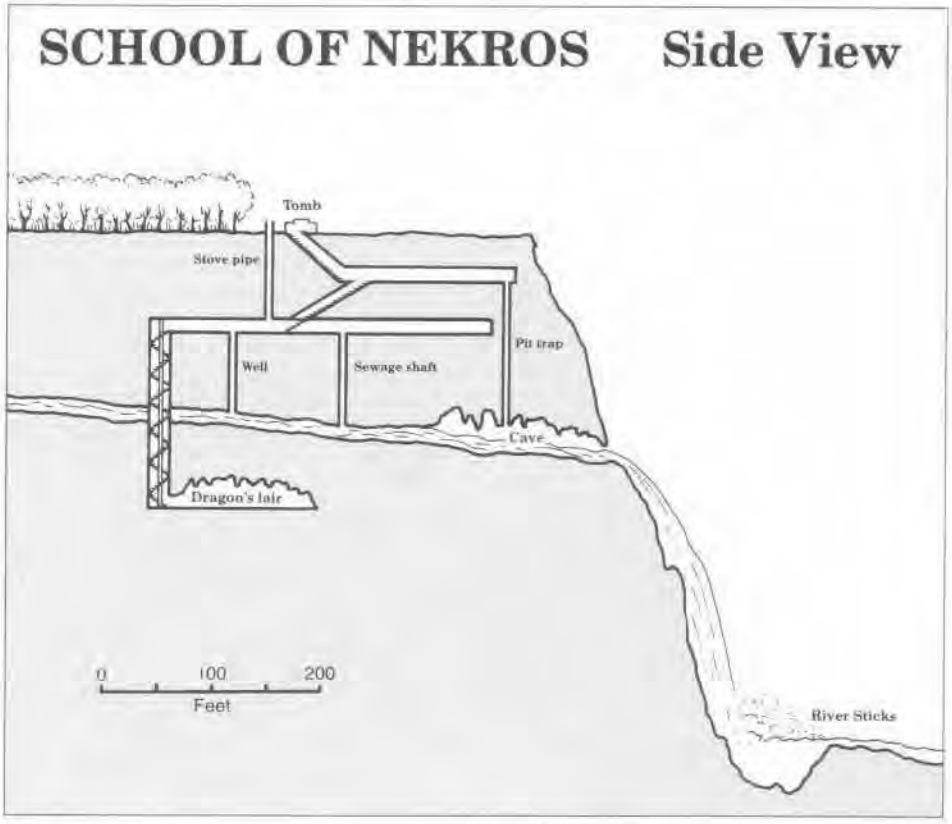
4. Lecture Hall. If it is between the hours of 6:30 P.M. and 11:30 P.M., the lecture hall will likely be empty; read the following:

> This room is lit by hooded lanterns, is semicircular in shape, and is constructed in the fashion of an ancient Greek theater. Carved into the rock itself are tiers of stone seats; stairs lead up to the higher seats.
>
> At the front of the room, a semicircular floor area is paved with black and gold tiles. At the center of this is a round, raised dais of black stone. The top of the dais is carved with gold-lined channels that direct fluid down into the four gold skull-shaped pots on the floor.
>
> The wall between the two doors to the hallway is smooth and white. At the back of the room, at the level of the top row of seats, is a strange brass object covered by a black cloth. A small wooden box sits nearby.

The white wall is a screen upon which images are projected. The brass lantern under the cloth contains a stone upon which a *continual light* spell has been cast. This stone projects its light through a lens at the front of the lantern. Painted squares of glass sit in slots in the nearby wooden. If a painted glass square is placed in the "magic lantern," an image of one of the steps of a necromancy spell is projected on the screen at the front of the room (the DM may decide which spell the slides show; a label to this effect will be found on the lid of the box).

The gold pots are each worth 300 gp.

This lecture hall is where magic is taught and sacrifices to the gods and goddesses of death are performed. It is



also where would-be students are tested by being killed and then brought back to life. The ritual involves stabbing the prospective student with a dragon-tooth dagger as the other students stand in a circle, hands clasped, and chant. The dead novice is then brought back to life through a *raise dead* spell, then is marked with the invisible *wizard mark* half moon.

If it is between the hours of midnight and 6:00 A.M., there is a 25% chance that this ritualistic admission ceremony is being performed on the promising new student Impavidus (see area 9M). Morphias is present, leading a group of 3-12 students. (This assumes that neither Morphias nor Impavidus have been encountered elsewhere. If either has been encountered, the ceremony may not be going on. In addition, when randomly determining the students present, remember to omit those already encountered elsewhere.)

If a ritual is not going on between the hours of midnight and 6:00 A.M., then either Morphias or Mephista (50% chance for each) is teaching a class of 3-12 students, using the slide projector.)

If it is between the hours of 6:00 A.M. and 6:30 A.M. or 11:30 P.M. and midnight, students are filing out of or into this room (1-6 are inside. Either Morphias or Mephista is also present on a roll of 1 on 1d8.).

5. Kitchen. Read the following to the players, unless it is time for one of the school's three meals of the day. Omit Laridum and Redux if they have already been encountered elsewhere:

> A huge wood-burning stove occupies the southeast corner of this room. In the center of the room there is a long table with 16 chairs around it. The table is set with black plates, black glass goblets, and cutlery made of brass and bone. Black candles sit in silver candlesticks at the center of the table, and the room is lit by lanterns on the walls. In the southwest corner, a bucket hangs on a rope from a wooden cross beam over a well. Large barrels line the west wall. Shelves on the south wall contain foodstuffs. A pile of wood sits near the stove. Four skeletons bustle about the room, adding kindling to the stove, stirring pots of bubbling stew, and adding a centerpiece of white lilies to the table.
>
> Sitting at one end of the table, eating a snack of bread and cheese and drinking a blood-red liquid, are a man and a woman in black velvet cloaks. He is a stout, deceptively jolly-looking man with only a fringe of brown hair on an otherwise bald pate. She is a woman with long brown tightly curled hair, and striking eyes—one green and one blue. Beside her, resting against the table, is a staff carved with ivy patterns. They are facing the door and notice you immediately as it opens.

The cooks and servants are special skeletons who once were two neutral human priests, a dwarven fighter, and a half-elven thief. All fell victim to the force field trap (area 1A) in the False Hall of Skulls, and now are serving the school for one year in the hope that their bodies will be restored to them (a promise the school will keep, but only after wiping all knowledge of that year from their minds through the *brainkill* spell). These living skeletons will not fight unless attacked, and may even give aid to PCs who present the possibility of returning them to normal. These skeletons cannot speak or cast spells but can see, hear, think, and control their own actions (when not being controlled by one of the *rings of Nekros*). They cannot be turned.

Living skeletons (4): AL NG, LG, NG, N; AC 7; MV 12; P3, P4, F2, T9; hp 20, 24, 14, 43; THAC0 20, 18, 20, 16; #AT 1 each; Dmg by weapon type; SD as per racial characteristics, cannot be turned; ML 10; XP nil (not enemies); new.

The two students having a quick snack between meals are Redux and Laridum. The barrels contain water and blood-red wine.

Laridum may look slow and harmless, but he is surprisingly agile and has muscles of steel beneath his expansive belly. He would have made an excellent fighter, but his keen intelligence led him to study magic instead.

Laridum, student: AL LE; AC 8; MV 12; W5; hp 18; THAC0 19; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by spell or weapon type (uses two daggers at once); S 18, D 16, C 12, I 17, W 17, Ch 10; ML 10; XP 975; two daggers, *ring of invisibility, ring of Nekros.*

Laridum has chosen his spells either because they inflict pain or because they are good "fighting spells." But, like many bullies, he'll run if the going gets really rough, using his *ring of invisibility* to aid him. He has memorized the following spells: *burning hands, chill touch, magic missile, protection from good, shield, Melf's acid arrow, pyrotechnics, spectral hand, Melf's minute meteors* (×2). An ambidextrous character, he fights with matching black daggers.

Laridum suspects (wrongly) that Redux is a neutral-good priest in disguise and would love to expose her as such to the twins. Whenever he finds her alone, he questions her subtly on her motives behind coming to the School of Nekros and is trying to catch her out in conversation.

Redux, in fact, must tread warily. The only nonevil student at the School of Nekros, she is true neutral in alignment. (Her nonevil alignment was missed when the twins cast a *detect good* spell; it did not pick up her neutrality.) She has measured the risks of learning the powerful restorative spells the school has to teach—risks both to her person and her soul—but has decided they are worth it. She will not perform evil acts on her own initiative but will fight to protect the knowledge the school offers.

Redux, student: AL N; AC 7; MV 12; W2; hp 12; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 11, D 13, C 18, I 16, W 18, Ch 17; ML 12; XP 175 (nil if she is attacked first); staff, *cloak of protection +3* (observant PCs may notice that her cloak is an extremely dark blue rather than true black), *periapt of wound closure, ring of Nekros.* Redux has the following spells memorized: *cantrip* (change), *hold portal, jump.*

If it is time for either breakfast, lunch, or supper, 2-12 students are seated at the table for a meal. In addition, there is a 10% chance (rolled once for each) that Meresger and either Morphias or Mephista (but not both twins) will be dining with the students.

6. Washroom.

> This small room contains a toilet (basically just an outhouse-style seat with a cover) and a carved stone wash basin of black marble. Beside the toilet sits a black stone carving of a mushroom, about 6" tall. The room smells sweet, like incense. The door locks from the inside with a simple sliding bolt.

The hole under the toilet opens into a narrow shaft that leads down to the river below. The mushroom is a magical item, a *'stool of sweet smelling.* It will purify the air in any one room, overcoming all other odors. If the magical mushroom is removed, the washroom will begin to smell.

If it is between the hours of 3:00 P.M. and midnight, the washroom is occupied (if Sicarius has not already been encountered elsewhere). The PCs must force the locked door to get inside, at which time they see:

> Washing her hands at the basin is a woman whose black robes match the ebony hue of her skin. She jumps, startled, as the door opens, and you can see that her hands are covered in a sticky white substance.

The woman washing her hands is Sicarius, a promising student who has traveled from a distant country to join the School of Nekros. A close friend of Malignus (see area 7), she shares with him a love of poison. But where he is careful with his venom, she courts death at every turn. Secretly in love with Morphias, she yearns to have him resurrect her once more. Ultimately, she would like to die with him and dwell with him in the land of the dead.

Sicarius has just come from the laboratory, where she has been mixing up toxic substances; the white gluey stuff is contact poison, disguised to smell like medicine, and it is starting to make her hands tingle. The school ring saved her from death, but she is finding it hard to work with numb hands.

Sicarius, student: AL NE; AC 6; MV 12; W6; hp 19; THAC0 19; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by spell or by poison (not currently carrying a weapon, but uses both hands at once); SA poison; S 13, D 18, C 10, I 16, W 16, Ch 10; ML 20; XP 1,400; *ring of Nekros.*

If attacked, Sicarius tries to smear PCs with the contact poison. Since it is diluted now by water, the save vs. poison is at a +4. She carries no other magical items and has few possessions, due to her firm belief that she and Morphias will soon dwell in the land of the dead together—and no longer in need of anything but each other.

One of the keenest students at the school, Sicarius has the following spells memorized: *cantrip* (change), *chill touch, comprehend languages, message, protection from good, knock, protection from cantrips, spectral hand, clairaudience, hold undead, vampiric touch.*

7. Library.

> This room is filled with shelves containing a multitude of books. From the ceiling hang a dozen silver chains, each suspending a glass skull that glows with a steady yellow light.
>
> Some of the books on the shelves are old, with cracked leather bindings, while others appear quite new. One shelf, fronted with glass doors, contains a row of nine exquisite books bound in black leather with gold titles along their spines. The glass doors are locked with a press-button combination lock. Armchairs are positioned around the room.

The glass skulls have a simple *continual light* spell cast on them and are used to illuminate the room.

If it is between the hours of 2:00 P.M. and midnight, add the following, omitting Carmen and/or Malignus if either or both have already been encountered elsewhere:

> In the armchair nearest the door sits a beautiful young woman whose white-blonde hair is braided with brilliant red feathers at the end of each braid. Resting against her forehead and hanging from a thin silver chain is a black stone, and lying on the floor beside her is a dragon-headed quarterstaff. Across the room, an older man looks up from a heavy tome he has been studying. His eyes are the thinnest of slits behind round wire-rim glasses, and his receding hairline has given him a high forehead. Both he and the woman are wearing black velvet robes. Bone-hilted daggers rest in sheaths at their hips.

This is the library of the School of Nekros. Studying in it are the students Carmen and Malignus.

Carmen has come to the School of Nekros seeking to further her knowl-

edge of dragons; the book she was reading deals with using dragon bones and teeth as spell components. Her primary concern is that the books in the library and Flagros herself not be harmed—at least until Carmen has had a chance to use them fully.

Carmen, student: AL LE; AC 9; MV 12; W3; hp 9; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 10, D 15, C 10, I 17, W 17, Ch 15; ML 12; XP 270; dagger, *quarterstaff +1, ring of Nekros,* dagger, jet stone on silver chain (50 gp value).

Carmen is a 3rd-level wizard specializing in necromancy. She has the following spells memorized: *color spray, magic missile* (using either one at a distance first), *chill touch, detect invisibility, spectral hand.*

Malignus has also come to the school to study, but his area of interest is poison, and the book he is reading concerns the preparation of poisons. A violent, ill-tempered older man, he would just as soon fight with his poisoned weapons as use his spells. These poisoned devices include a hollow dagger containing enough venom for four stabs (save vs. poison or die); a glass vial of contact poison (save vs. paralysis or lapse into a coma for 1-4 days) in the breast pocket of his robe, ready to be thrown; and a cheap-looking, snake-shaped brass cloak pin, a prick from which will cause death (save vs. poison). Believing each of his victims to be a pleasing sacrifice to the gods of evil, he is happiest when killing and is known to smile only in battle.

Malignus, student: AL NE; AC 6; MV 12; W6; hp 17; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 15, D 18, C 10, I 16, W 16, Ch 5; ML 14; XP 2,000; *ring of Nekros,* poison dagger, vial of contact poison, poison brooch.

Malignus is a 6th-level wizard specializing in necromancy who has the following spells memorized: *chill touch, enlarge, magic missile* (×3), *protection from cantrips, spectral hand, strength, clairaudience, sepia snake sigil, vampiric touch.*

Among the mundane books of the library, the PCs can find tomes on such topics as anatomy and dissection, medicine, acupuncture, herbal lore, the collection of spell components, mummification, tomb construction, poison, burial practices of various races, gods and goddesses of death, prophecies of how the world will come to an end, tanning and taxidermy, and flower pressing. All are marked, in the fashion of library books, with a black half moon on the bottom of the spine. Touching any mundane text results in 1-4 hp electrical damage per touch or per six seconds held. School of Nekros students are immune to this effect, however; the books "recognize" a student by the invisible half moon on his left hand, which must be pressed to the half moon on the book's spine before touching any other part of the book.

The combination push-button lock on the glass-fronted cabinet has nine buttons, numbered 1 through 9. To successfully open the lock, any combination of numbers adding up to 13 must be pressed. When the numbers total precisely 13, the lock clicks open. If numbers adding up to less than 13 are pushed, and 10 or more minutes pass, the lock resets to a total of zero. But, at the precise moment that the total passes 13 (without adding up to exactly 13), the following occurs: A cloud of purple gas flows out of holes in the bottom of the bookcase, filling the library within 12 seconds and putting to sleep all it engulfs. (This is a contact gas and does not need to be inhaled; save vs. paralyzation; effects as per a *sleep* spell.) The gas dissipates in 10 minutes. Breaking or forcing the glass doors has the same effect.

The black and gold books are reference spell books—each also marked with an electrified half moon—used by the students who study at the school. Each contains necromancy spells of a particular level (see the sidebar list of necromancy spells available at the school for details).

8. Chamber of Meresger.

> This 20′ × 20′ room contains a wooden chest at the foot of a brass bed with white skull bedposts. The bed is neatly made with black sheets and blankets. On one wall hangs a full length mirror, and a plush red throw rug covers the center of the floor. Against the north wall are four large pottery urns, covered with perforated lids. Beside them sits two small wicker baskets from which come rustling and clicking noises.

Unless Meresger has been encountered elsewhere or is sleeping, also read the following:

> Standing before the mirror, looking into it with a critical eye, is an elderly woman whose graying hair is pulled back in a tight bun under a black lace hair net. Crawling on the woman's shoulder is a hairy black spider the size of a human fist.

This is the bedroom of Meresger, "she who loves silence," servant to Mephista and Morphias and keeper of the snakes and other poisonous beasties that inhabit the corridors of the School of Nekros. The pet on her shoulder is her particular favorite—a baby giant black widow spider, newly hatched, which she has named Perfidus, after the husband Meresger murdered years ago.

Meresger, servant: AL LE; AC 10; MV 12; W2; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; SA poisoned dagger (+2 save vs. poison or die); S 13, D 10, C 18, I 16, W 17, Ch 11; ML 18; XP 420; poisoned dagger, *periapt of proof against poison +4, scarab vs. golems, ring of Nekros,* skull-headed key to the tomb above the school.

Meresger fights like a cornered mother cat, using an envenomed dagger. She has the following spells memorized: *cantrip* (spider), *chill touch, magic missile.*

The urns (from left to right) contain the sleeping beasties Meresger feeds and cares for as pets:

Urn 1: **Centipedes, giant** (2-24): Int non; AL N; AC 9; MV 15; HD ¼; hp 2 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg nil; SA poison; SZ T; ML 6; XP 35; MC.

Urn 2: **Snakes, poisonous** (1-3): Int animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 15; HD 2+1; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison; SZ S; ML 8; XP 175; MC.

Urn 3: **Scorpions, small** (1-12): Int non; AL N; AC 5; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 20 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-4/1-4/1; SA poison sting; SZ S; ML 0; XP 175; MC.

Urn 4: **Spiders, large** (2-20): Int non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6, web 15; HD 1+1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison bite; SZ S; ML 7; XP 120; MC.

Meresger often lets her pets out to roam throughout the school, where they may be encountered by adventurers as wandering monsters. (Many of the students despise her pets and kill them surreptitiously; punishment for such acts is corpse disposal duty.)

If attacked within this room, Meresger tips over an urn (determine at

random, rolling 1d4) so that her pets can aid her in battle.

The wicker baskets (ironically, made by halflings!) contain insects and rodents that Meresger feeds to her pets. The chest contains Meresger's personal belongings; there's nothing special here, just a few robes and trinkets. The mirror, which is a *mirror of inner beauty*, is the only magical item in the room. Its only magical property is as follows: If a PC stands before it and chants: "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" the mirror presents an X-ray picture of the PC, showing only the skeleton.

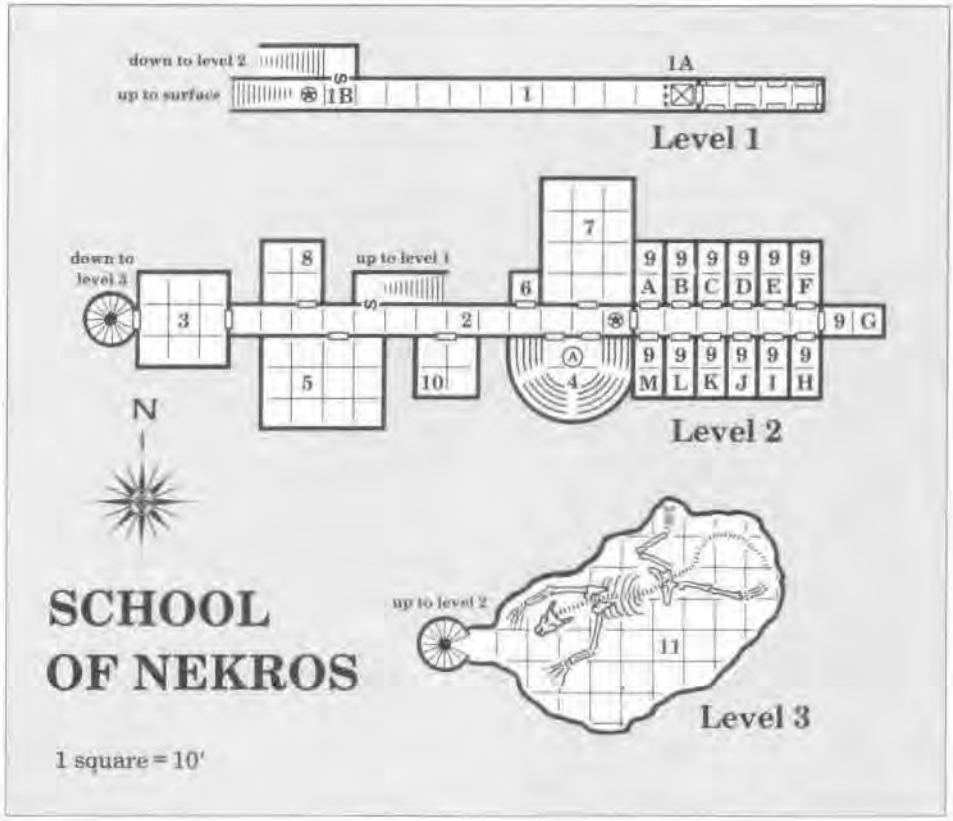
9. Student Dormitories. These small rooms are designed to house one student each. If it is between the hours of 6:30 A.M. and 2:00 P.M., the students will be sleeping in the following rooms (unless they have already been encountered elsewhere): 9A Laridum; 9B Feralis; 9C Cadaver; 9D empty; 9E Vado; 9F Malignus; 9G Sicarius; 9H Balatro; 9I Redux; 9J Timor; 9K Origo; 9L Carmen; 9M Impavidus.

Between 2:00 P.M. and midnight, most of the rooms will be empty; the students are elsewhere in the school, studying, eating, reading in the library, or experimenting in the lab. During these times, read the following description for any empty rooms (all of those except areas 9C, 9H, 9K and 9M):

> This 10' × 20' room contains a coffin fitted out as a bed with padding and blankets, a plain wooden chest for belongings, a black velvet robe hanging on a peg, a brazier that gives off smoky red light, and a stool beside a sturdy table. On top of the table are glass containers of black, purple, and gold ink; black quill pens; and sheets of vellum.

The vellum is made from human skin and sometimes bears tattoos. Most of the sheets are blank, but some may contain half-finished spells.

Each of the chests has a secret false bottom where the spell books of the students (made up of the bound vellum sheets) are kept when not in use. To determine which spells a book has, the DM should note whose book it is, include all of the spells listed for that character, and add others that seem appropriate to a wizard of that level specializing in necromancy. But please



note: There is a 10% chance that any of the necromancy spells in these books has been incorrectly copied and thus will backfire if used as written.

There are 1-4 miscellaneous items to be found in each room. Roll 1d20 to determine which items are found:

1. a bone dagger
2. 1-4 empty potion vials (still labelled)
3. a portrait of a succubus
4. a copper ring
5. a glass figurine of a snake
6. a crudely sketched map of the school
7. a practice wand (not magical)
8. a stuffed black cat
9. a pewter goblet
10. a ball of string
11. a pair of tweezers
12. a tinder box
13. a clove of garlic
14. a last will and testament
15. 1-4 black candles
16. a pair of dice, loaded to always come up "snake eyes"
17. a bottle of blood-red wine in a crystal decanter
18. a chunk of cheese
19. a romance novel
20. an embroidered scabbard for a dagger

9C. Cadaver's Room. This room matches the general description for student rooms given previously. After reading the boxed text at area 9, continue with the following:

> In the coffin lies a very pale, auburn-haired man. His hands are folded on his chest, and a lily rests between them. Below the flower, a clove of garlic lies on the smooth black velvet of his robe. He is extremely thin and looks a little blue in the cheeks. It is impossible to tell if he is dead or alive.

This is Cadaver, a student so named by the twins due to his appearance and to his ability to sleep soundly and heavily through almost any disturbance. Indeed, the PCs can clomp through the room, making all the noise they want—he wakes up only 5% of the time!

Cadaver, student: AL LE; AC 9; MV 12; W2; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 8; D 9, C 10,

I 17, W 16, Ch 12; ML 12; XP 175; *ring of protection +1, ring of Nekros.*

Cadaver, a 2nd-level wizard specializing in necromancy, has the following spells memorized: *chill touch, protection from good, shield.*

The garlic and lily have been placed on Cadaver by Balatro (see area 9M) as a practical joke. In Cadaver's chest are potions of *diminution, healing,* and *gaseous form,* the latter of which he plans to use to turn Balatro's joke around on him by pretending to really be a vampire.

9H. Balatro's Room. After reading the general description of a student's room, continue with the following:

> A leather belt hangs on a peg beside the robe. A curious brass bottle sits next to the quill pens and vellum. Scuttling across the floor is a white rat wearing a collar from which hangs a tiny, tinkling brass bell.

The brass bottle is an *eversmoking bottle.* Under his pillow, Balatro has hidden a silver *flask of curses.* In the secret compartment of the chest, in addition to Balatro's spell book (written entirely in pig Latin) is a *bag of tricks.* The belt on the wall peg is of tooled leather that has been marked with a series of circles ("male" and "female" symbols) and is a *girdle of femininity/masculinity.* While some of these items are hidden, many are deliberately left unconcealed; Balatro is just waiting for someone to find them and use them! The rat is Balatro's pet, and is named Twinkles (the name is carved into the studded leather collar). Balatro will kill anyone who harms Twinkles.

Twinkles the rat: Int animal; AL N; AC 7; MV 15; HD ¼; hp 1; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SZ T (1' long); ML 3; XP 7.

9K. Origo's Room. In addition to reading the standard description of a student's dormitory room, add the following:

> Sitting on the stool, her back toward the door, is a young woman with short black hair and broad shoulders. The sleeves of her black robe are rolled up, and you can see black tatoos of skulls snaking up her arms as she sits writing with a white quill pen on vellum.

This is Origo, the first student to come to the School of Nekros. A brilliant peasant girl who left the farm to find adventure, she fell in with a bad crowd and her evil tendencies increased. Origo is a "teacher's pet" who can do no wrong, and of whom Sicarius (see area 4) is extremely jealous.

Origo, student: AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; W3; hp 11; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 17, D 12, C 18, I 16, W 16, Ch 17; ML 15; XP 270; dagger, *ring of Nekros.*

Origo has memorized the spells *chill touch, continual light, sleep, see through other eyes,* and *spectral hand.* She fights with a dagger, and the tattoos on her arms are a permanent record of her dead victims; each skull has a series of three numbers (e.g., 12/24/1066) under it, marking the date of the kill.

9M. Impavidus's Room.

> The sound of laughter comes from behind this door, which is open a few inches. Listening, you can hear two male voices.

Peeking inside the door, the PCs see a standard student dormitory room (see description at area 9). On top of the table, in addition to the other items noted, is a cage containing a pigeon.

> Sitting on the stool and leaning over the table is a young, extremely comely man in black robes. Although his back is toward the door, he has turned slightly to his right so that you can just see the edges of his curly black beard from where you stand. Leaning against the table at which he is writing is a heavy metal staff. To his right stands a man whose shaved head is already showing a shadow of hair. Resting on the standing man's ears is a gold headband. One of his eyes is covered with a black patch.
>
> The bald man is extending his hand to the younger man (who is doing his best to ignore him) and saying, "C'mon Impavidus, shake my hand! C'mon! C'mon! I promise it's not loaded this time. C'mon—what are ya, scared or something?"
>
> If you leave quietly, they might not notice you.

The younger man—whose looks are indeed perfect—is Impavidus, a would-be necromancer who arrived at the school of Nekros today. He is busily writing a letter (which he will send by carrier pigeon, after the twins have carefully scrutinized it) to one of his many lovers, and the text is full of romantic cliches and boasts. Confident that he will pass his initiation ritual with ease, and absolutely fearless in everything he does, Impavidus is going through the usual hazing that Balatro dishes out to any new student who will tolerate him. The sleeve of Impavidus's new black robe is charred, and his patience is about to wear thin.

Impavidus, student: AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; W0; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 17, C 12, I 16, W 16, Ch 18; ML 16; XP 15; staff. Impavidus knows no spells and has not yet been given a school ring.

Trying to trick Impavidus—a second time—into touching his hand, a finger of which has a firefinger *cantrip* cast upon it, is the student Balatro, the chaotic-evil joker of the student body.

Balatro, student: AL CE; AC 9; MV 12; W7; hp 20; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type (unarmed); S 11, D 15, C 10, I 16, W 16, Ch 7; ML 12; XP 2,000; *ring of Nekros, wand of wonder.*

Balatro, most powerful of the student wizards at the School of Nekros, has the following spells memorized: *chill touch, cantrip* (×4: grease, hairy, ravel, spill), *ESP, protection from cantrips, spectral hand, stinking cloud, delude, dispel magic, feign death, contagion, polymorph other.*

Willing to risk anything for a laugh—preferably at someone else's pain and expense—Balatro collects strange and wonderfully tricky magical devices and always goes armed with his *wand of wonder* tucked into his belt. He has come to the School of Nekros to learn such wonderfully amusing spells as *chill touch, feign death,* and *contagion.* Extremely fond of casting cantrips, he was almost expelled for using a *scratch* spell on Mephista during a lecture. The patch over his eye comes from playing at the peephole in the door to the twins' room (area 3). He has no weapons aside from a rubber dagger and a collapsible tin dagger; he insists upon fighting with only magic. The headband he is wearing is worth 100 gp.

10. Laboratory.

> This 20′ × 20′ room is fitted out as a laboratory. Long wooden tables are filled with beakers, vials, stoppered bottles, and lidded ceramic bowls. A locked, heavy iron chest sits in one corner of the room.

If it is between the hours of 2:30 P.M. and midnight, and if Feralis and Vado have not already been encountered elsewhere, add the following:

> Sitting on stools, working together at one of the benches with their backs to you, are two figures in black robes. One is a slender woman with gray hair and overly large ears. She is working with quick, nervous movements. The other, a blond man still in his teens, is visibly angry and cursing over a beaker that is emitting noxious green smoke.
>
> The woman, hearing the door open, calls over her shoulder, "Sicarius, is that you? Come quickly! We need your help!"

The pair are two 1st-level students. The woman, Vado, began to study magic when her strength started to fail her after a long life of crime. Prior to coming to the School of Nekros, she was the lover of a vicious bandit leader. So callous was Vado that she gladly went along when he looted the village where she grew up, all for revenge against the townsfolk who teased and called her "Mouse" as a child due to her overly large ears and quick actions. Vado has many nervous gestures but has trained herself to be cold as steel underneath.

Vado, student: AL NE; AC 9; MV 12; W1; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 6, D 15, C 12, I 16, W 16, Ch 6; ML 13; XP 120; two daggers, *ring of Nekros.*

Vado, a wizard specializing in necromancy, fights with throwing daggers that are strapped to her arms under her robe. She has the following spells memorized: *cantrip* (dampen), *chill touch.*

The man, Feralis, has a temper that erupts at a moment's notice. A brilliant alchemist even at his young age, his concoctions often fail due to his impatience. At all times he carries two potions of *extra healing,* necessary for when his experiments go awry.

Feralis, student; AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; W1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 13, D 9, C 15, I 17, W 16, Ch 13; ML 12; XP 120; dagger, *ring of Nekros.* Feralis, a 1st-level wizard specializing in necromancy, has memorized the spells *cantrip* (warm) and *color spray.*

While many students refuse to work in the laboratory with Feralis, Vado has chosen to do so as a test of her bravery, while the now-absent Sicarius (see area 4) does so because she embraces death.

(Note: There is a 10% chance that the experiment the two wizards are working on will violently explode, doing 1-4 hp damage from flying glass to everyone in the room.)

Inside the chest are various gems (diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, black pearls and quartz crystals), 1-4 of each type, grouped by type in neatly tied black velvet bags. A further bag holds a tiny grinding wheel, and its inside is dusted with mixed grindings from various gems. Like the other things to be found in this room, these gems are material components used in spell-casting.

The beaches and shelves hold a wide range of spell components including: bat fur, crystal beads, miniature shovels and buckets, tiny bells, rolls of fine silver wire, oranges and lemons, black powdered paint, scraps of red cloth, feathers, glass rods, incense, iron daggers, a small drum, candles, small leather bags, chunks of bone, and ram's horns. The jars and vials on the various shelves hold: powdered bone, saltpeter, powdered gems, rotten eggs, bat guano, sulphur, blood, dung, clay, sand, lime, soil, powdered pineal glands, brass shavings, bitumen, spider webs, and honey.

11. Lair of Flagros, the Red Dragon.

> A narrow, winding stair cut roughly into the rock leads deep into the earth. The stairs and walls are wet with seeping moisture, and a dull roaring can be heard behind the wall on one side. It is possible to walk only in single file along the stairs, and you cannot see where you are going.

The narrow, sometimes low-ceilinged stairway has been made more menacing by a series of permanent *darkness, 15′ radius* spells cast along its length. Morphias and Mephista are used to traveling the staircase and have no difficulty with it. But each PC, walking on slippery steps in darkness, must roll a dexterity check on 1d20 or slip and fall, possibly knocking PCs below them off of their feet (each PC below must roll a dexterity check on 1d12 to move aside in time). A tumble down the steps is good for 1-6 hp damage.

Unless she has been encountered and defeated elsewhere (the DM really shouldn't let this happen but should save her for this encounter), Mephista is in the area at the bottom of the stairs. If she has been encountered, the DM could substitute a student (select a student at random by rolling 1d12 on the Wandering Monsters table, ignoring those who have been encountered elsewhere; be sure to give the student a good motive for being here!).

> The passageway opens at last onto a 80′ × 50′ rough cavern in which the skeleton of a huge, 50′-long dragon—obviously unearthed long after her flesh rotted away—lies upon disturbed soil. A wide crack in the ceiling near the base of the staircase is filled with large chunks of stone. The skeletal dragon shifts slightly, and a thin trickle of dirt falls from it.

If the party has made a noisy arrival, Mephista is alert and ready for potential attack. If, however, the PCs have the element of surprise, read the following also:

> A figure in black robes is bent low, watching as the skeletal dragon scratches arcane symbols into the floor of the cavern with a claw. Beside the human is a piece of vellum, an ink pot, and a quill pen.

Mephista immediately attacks intruders who are obviously not part of the school. There is a slim chance, of course, that fast-talking PCs with enough knowledge will be able to convince her that they have come to apply as new students. Otherwise, the battle is immediately joined, with Mephista seeking to protect the dragon at all cost.

Mephista, dean of the School of Nekros: AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; W18; hp 33; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg by spell or weapon type; S 9, D 12, C 9, I 18, W 17, Ch 9; ML 16; XP 12,000; dagger, *scarab of protection, pipes of pain, ring of sustenance, ring of Nekros, ring of spell stor-*

ing (three fifth-level *raise dead* spells; not worn). In her left pocket she carries a skull-headed key that unlocks the door of the tomb above. The tiny silver key that unlocks the chest in the laboratory (area 10) is on a chain around her neck.

Mephista, an 18th-level wizard specializing in necromancy, has the following spells memorized: *burning hands, cantrip* (sour), *detect magic, light, protection from good, shield, continual light, glitterdust, protection from cantrips, see through other eyes, spectral hand, web, clairvoyance, hold undead, monster summoning I, spectral force, vampiric touch, wraithform, brainkill, contagion, plant growth, remove curse, shout, wall of ice, animal growth, avoidance, dismissal, distance distortion, summon shadow, teleport, death spell, ensnarement, lower water, stone to flesh, banishment, finger of death, power word stun, teleport without error, clone, permanency, sink, energy drain, power word kill.*

The bulk of Flagros's treasure was stolen long ago; it was from the thieves that Morphias and Mephista learned the location of the ancient dragon's bones. The thieves first reached the dragon's lair through the narrow fissure leading upward to ground level, an opening that has since been blocked off with large chunks of stone. Disturbing the rocks above is one way to get out, but it is also the way to bring a few heavy stones crashing down upon anyone below, for 2-12 hp damage with each disturbance.

Extremely observant players (or those with a kind DM) could find the following treasure, overlooked because it fell into a crack and was later covered by rubble: 1,044 cp, 1,785 sp, 3,837 gp, and 1-12 gems worth 50-500 each.

Flagros is (or was) a venerable red dragon. Although her skeleton is animated, she is not undead and thus cannot be turned. As mentioned previously, she cannot fly, use spells, speak, or use her breath weapon. She has the ability to *detect invisible objects*, but no other special visual talents.

Flagros, skeletal red dragon: Int exceptional; AL CE; AC −1; MV 9, burrow 6, jump 3; HD 19; hp 99; THAC0 −5 (5 with +10 to hit); #AT 3; Dmg 1d8+10/1d8+10/3d10+10; SA kick and tail slap, *fear* aura (−2 save); SD save as 19th-level warrior, immune to fire and heat; MR 55%; SZ G; ML 18; XP 21,000; MC (Dragon, Red, with changes due to skeletal form).

Due to her exceptional intelligence and memory, Flagros is able to use her claws to scratch out instructions that enable Morphias and Mephista to learn and use the spells that the dragon once knew. Because these spells are ancient and not currently in circulation among wizards, this information is extremely valuable to the twins. They have sworn an oath to use Flagros's *air to flesh* spell to restore her body to her once she has taught them an agreed upon number of spells.

While Flagros does not take her pact with the twins seriously, she does need them to restore her fully to her original form through the *air to flesh* spell she has taught them. Thus, she is careful not to annoy or attack either the twins or their students. Only after she is a fully fledged red dragon once more will she betray them—after all, it was humans who stole her treasure, wasn't it?

If Mephista is killed and the PCs stand a good chance of defeating Flagros, read the following:

> With a great clattering of bones, the skeletal dragon twists suddenly and smashes a clawed hand into the ceiling. In moments, rocks and dirt rain down upon you as she frantically claws her way to the surface. The earth trembles below, it is difficult to remain standing, and dust and noise fill the air. The screams of your companions are the last thing you hear as the ceiling comes crashing down upon you.

Everyone in the cavern takes 2-24 hp damage from falling debris. Anyone suffering 10 or more hp damage in the cave-in is deemed to have been trapped by rubble and, if unaided, must make a strength check on 1d20 to free himself. The PCs can escape at this point by climbing up through the rubble to the surface.

Those still trapped face further danger. Because Flagros claws her way to the surface through the underground river, water begins to pour into the cavern. While most of the PCs should easily be able to climb to the surface before the entire school is flooded, anyone pinned by debris and unable to free himself will drown. As the rooms of the

school fill up with water, any light, loose items are swept away to turn up later downriver.

Any inhabitants of the School of Nekros alive at the time Flagros claws her way to the surface take damage and risk being trapped and drowned as described above. Those who survive this damage can also crawl up to the surface. Should they have the strength, surviving necromancers may attack the PCs in the rubble scattered across the graveyard. Most, however, will flee; there is a flat 75% chance that each survivor simply turns and runs as soon as he is above ground.

Concluding the Adventure

Driving Flagros away and mopping up the remaining evil wizards will effectively accomplish the goal of this adventure. The twins (if they survive) will follow Flagros, Meresger will follow the twins, the surviving students will scatter, and the school itself will have been destroyed as the skeletal dragon claws her way up through it and the river water rushes in.

Of course, the survivors might bear a grudge against the party and might eventually return (once healthy and able) in subsequent adventures to take their revenge upon the PCs.

Should the PCs be defeated by the inhabitants of the School of Nekros, they will be taken prisoner and stripped of all valuables. The unlucky will be killed and *raised* over and over again in practice sessions by students. The lucky ones (those with a kind DM) will instead be subjected to one year's imprisonment as a living skeleton, then upon release will suffer erasure of all knowledge of that year through a *brainkill* spell. They will then have their flesh restored and will be blindfolded, taken some distance from the school, and released to wander without equipment or weapons in the woods below the bluff.

Whatever method the PCs use to defeat the inhabitants of the School of Nekros, they will presumably want to return to Willow Whisp to announce the successful conclusion of their quest. The DM should roll as usual for wandering monsters in forest. There is a 50% chance that any of these random wilderness encounters along the way back to Willow Whisp is with a lone survivor of the School of Nekros (determined at random from a DM-generated list of survivors).

Back in Willow Whisp, the party will be welcomed with joy and much celebration. The halflings reward the party with a grand feast of whatever the remaining halflings can scrounge up (including several very fine bottles of wine). The PCs are also each given a "key to the city," made by the village blacksmith, that identifies them as friends of all halflings. Finally, the adventurers are offered a "perpetual welcome" of one month's free food and lodging per year in Willow Whisp for the rest of their lives. Ω

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